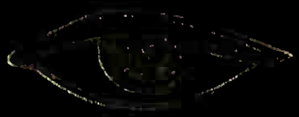


MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

1994

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

http://archive.org/details/manmythmagici20cave

SAUSALITO PUBLIC LIBRARY
2-28-95

3 1111 01487 6914

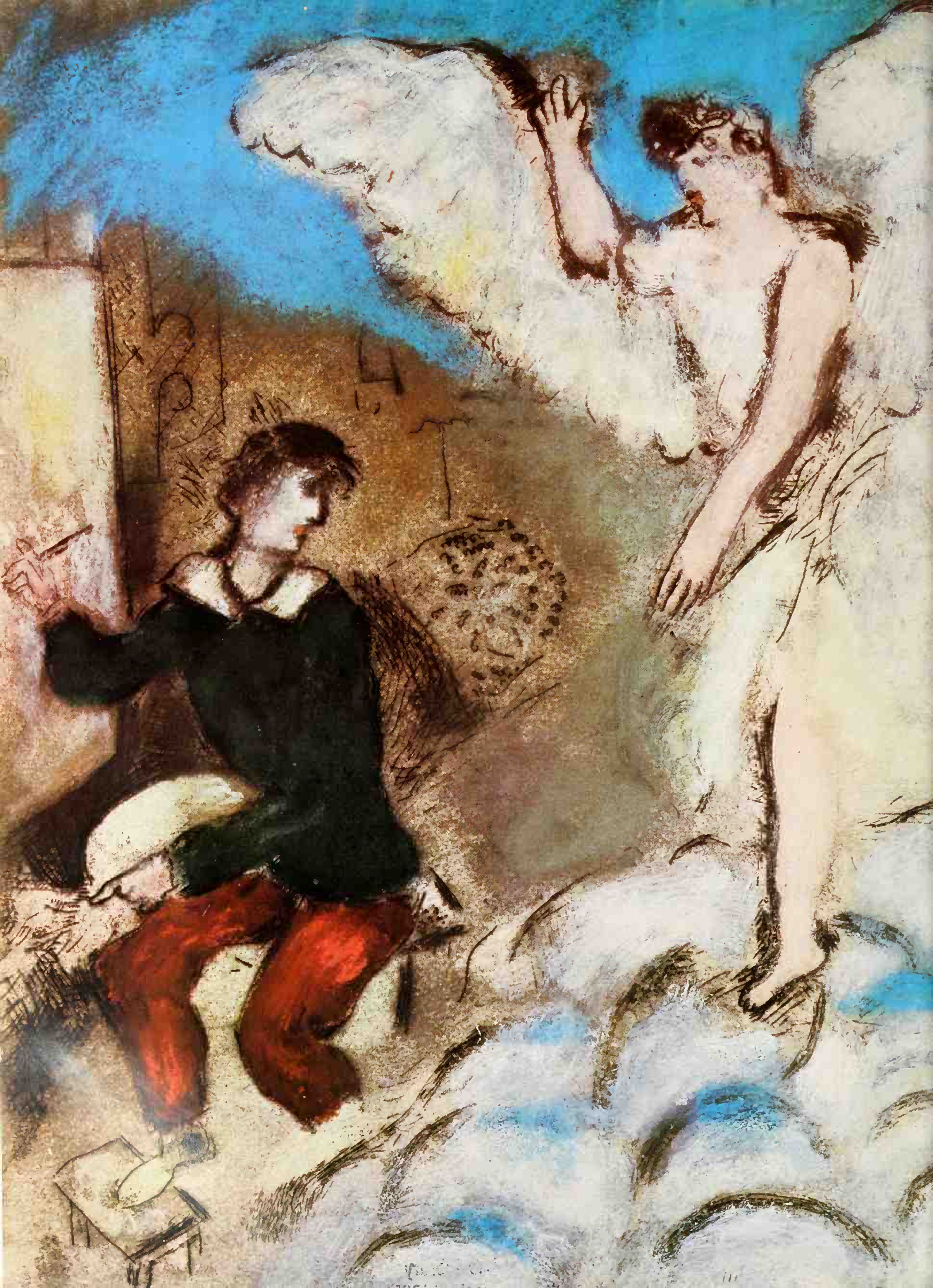
REFERENCE
LIBRARY USE ONLY

For Reference
Not to be taken from this room

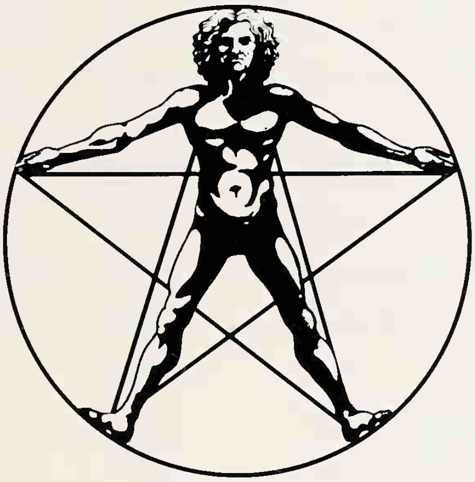
MAN,
MYTH &
MAGIC

VOLUME 20

Virg-Zurv



MAN, MYTH & MAGIC



The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

Editor-in-Chief
Richard Cavendish

Editorial Board
C. A. Burland; Professor Glyn Daniel;
Professor E. R. Dodds; Professor Mircea Eliade;
William Sargant; John Symonds;
Professor R. J. Zwi Werblowsky;
Professor R. C. Zaehner.

New Edition edited and compiled by
Richard Cavendish and Brian Innes

MARSHALL CAVENDISH
NEW YORK, LONDON, TORONTO, SYDNEY

Sausalito Public Library
Sausalito, California 94965

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-Chief	Richard Cavendish
Editorial Board	C. A . Burland Glyn Daniel E. R. Dodds Mircea Eliade William Sargant John Symonds R. J. Zwi Werblowsky R. C. Zaehner
Special Consultants	Rev. S. G. F. Brandon Katherine M. Briggs William Gaunt Francis Huxley John Lehmann
Deputy Editor	Isabel Sutherland
Assistant Editors	Frank Smyth Malcolm Saunders Tessa Clark Julie Thompson Polly Patullo
Art Director	Brian Innes
Art Editor	Valerie Kirkpatrick
Design Assistant	Andrzej Bielecki
Picture Editors	John McKenzie Ann Horton

REVISED 1985

Executive Editor	Yvonne Deutch
Editorial Consultant	Paul G. Davis
Editors	Emma Fisher Mary Lambert Sarah Litvinoff

REVISED 1995

Editors	Richard Cavendish Brian Innes
Assistant Editor	Amanda Harman

Frontispiece: *The Vision*, by Chagall: a census in 1899 suggested that one person in sixteen sees an apparition once in the course of a lifetime, and that one in thirty of these is of a religious, exalted or highly poetic nature (John Webb)

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Man, myth and magic: the illustrated encyclopedia of mythology, religion and the unknown / editor in chief, Richard Cavendish

Rev. ed. of Man, myth & magic.
Includes bibliographical references and index
ISBN 1-85435-731-X (set)
1. Occultism – Encyclopedias. 2. Mythology – Encyclopedias. 3. Religion – Encyclopedias.
I. Cavendish, Richard. II. Man, myth & magic.
BF 1407.M34 1994
133'.03 – dc20

94-10784
CIP

Published by Marshall Cavendish Corporation
2415 Jerusalem Avenue
North Bellmore, New York 11710

© Marshall Cavendish Corporation 1995
© Marshall Cavendish Ltd 1983, 1985
© B. P. C. Publishing Limited 1970

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the copyright holders.

Printed and Bound in Italy by L.E.G.O. S.p.a. Vicenza.

CONTENTS Volume 20

Virgo 2743
Vishnu 2744
Visions 2747
Voodoo 2751
Wagner 2757
A.E.Waite 2759
Waldenses 2759
Walsingham 2763
Walworth Jumpers 2764
Wand 2765
Wandering Bishops 2767
Wandering Jew 2770
Water 2771
Weather Magic 2777
Thomas Weir 2779
Werewolf 2779
Western Mystery Tradition 2784
Whale 2787
Wheel 2788
White 2791
White Magic 2792
Whitsun 2796
Widdershins 2796
Wild Hunt 2796
Wildwood 2797
Mrs Willett 2804
Will-o-the-Wisp 2805
Willow 2805
Wings 2806
Winter 2809
Wisdom Literature 2814
Wish 2814
Wish-Bone 2814
Wishing-Well 2814
Witchcraft 2815
Wolf 2819
Woman 2822
Women's Mysteries 2832
Woodpecker 2836
Wraith 2836
Wreath 2836
Wren 2837
J.M.H.-Wronski 2838
Wryneck 2839
Yahweh 2839
W.B.Yeats 2842
Yew 2845
Yggdrasil 2846
Yin and Yang 2846
Yoga 2846
Zealots 2852
Zen 2854
Zeus 2862
Zion 2867
Zodiac 2867
Zombies 2868
Zoroastrianism 2870
Zulu 2876
Zurvan 2880

VIRGO

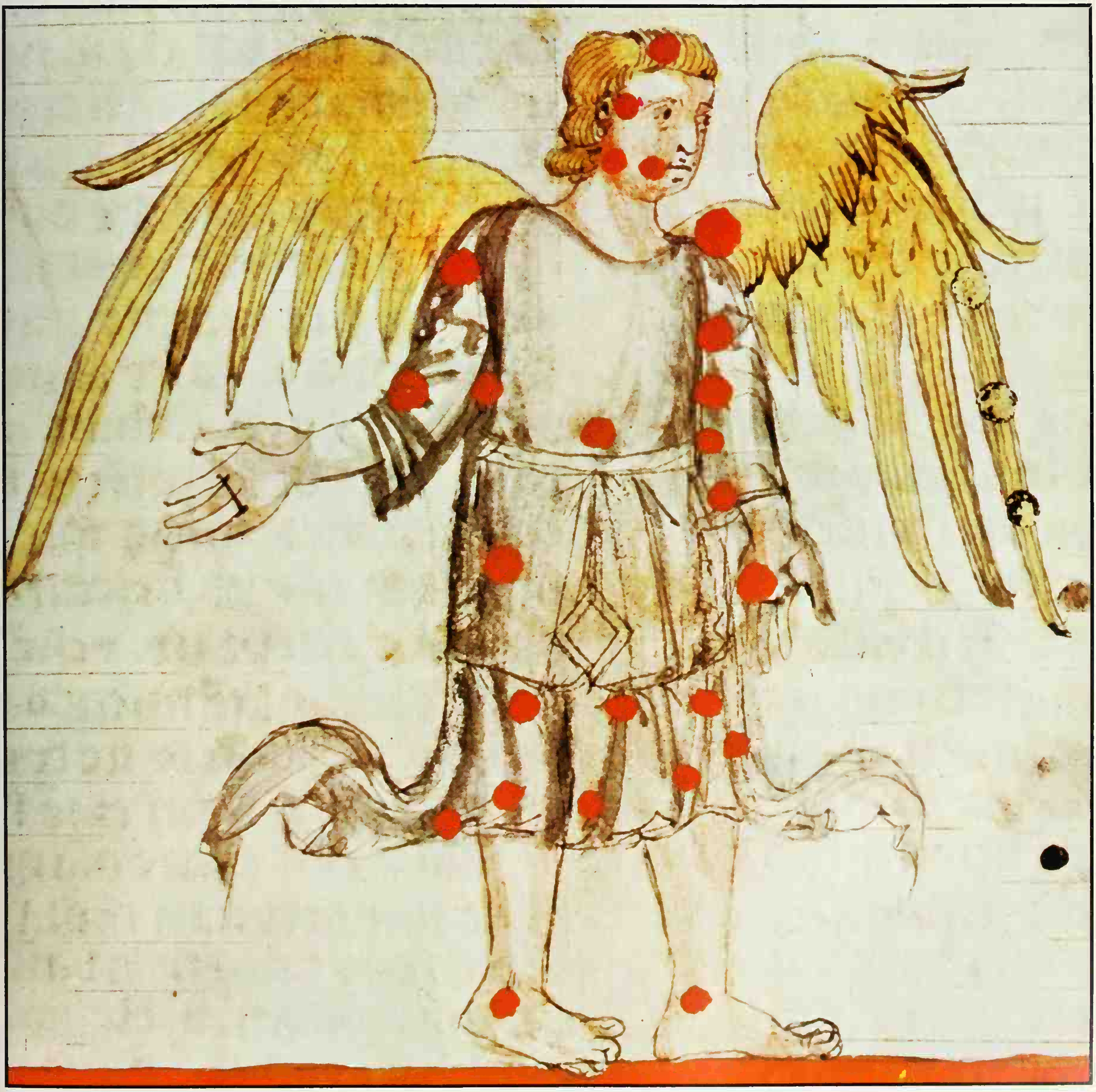
THIS is one of the 'mutable' signs in traditional astrology (the others being Gemini, Sagittarius and Pisces), so termed because the Sun is 'in' them at times of the year when one season is changing into another. In Virgo's case the dates are 23 August to 22 September, when summer gives way to autumn, and the effect on you, if Virgo is important in your birth chart, is to give you a strong impulse to be of service to others, as a parallel to the way in which the old season is making way for the new to further the progress of the year. Astrologers also say that you will be changeable and adaptable, but this is modified by the fact that Virgo is associated with the element of earth, which in terms of personality analysis is translated into 'keeping one's feet on the ground'.

Those born under the sign of the Virgin do not, of course, necessarily have defective love-lives as a result, but they are expected to be quiet and undemonstrative in affairs of the heart. They may be genuinely affectionate but not fully involved with their partners, and in general they tend to keep themselves to themselves and to shrink away from very close relationships with other people. Unassuming and retiring, they are modest, prudent, and possessed of considerable cool charm. Strong Virgo influence is said to produce a personality that is spinsterish in the bad sense.

The influence of Mercury, the sign's ruling planet, brings intelligence, excellent communicative abilities, possibly a knack for languages. The Virgo person is likely to be logical and tidy-minded, suspicious of abstract ideas and emotional attitudes, fond of exactitude, perhaps pedantic.

Sensible, reliable, busy, cautious, careful with money, the Virgo person's preference for practical concerns is not a mark of materialism but is harnessed to his genuine and idealistic bent for service. Natives of Virgo are said to make good doctors, teachers, accountants and secretaries.

Those born under Virgo are destined to be of service to others, unassuming and retiring, modest and prudent: representation of Virgo from a 15th-century astrological treatise



British Museum

In early Hindu mythology Vishnu was relatively unimportant, but through coalescing with other gods he achieved – with Shiva – a supreme place in the Hindu pantheon

VISHNU

THE HINDUS are not monotheists, strictly speaking, but they all agree that there is one supreme and eternal Principle, one abiding reality behind the whole phenomenal universe which is in a state of perpetual flux. This belief is central to Hinduism and because neither the Buddhists nor the Jains (see JAINS) believe in such a Principle, the Hindus call them *nastikas*, 'heretics', or more literally, 'people who do not believe in Being', that is to say in immutable Being beyond all becoming. This 'Being' is the Absolute, and in theology it is called Brahman or simply the 'Self' (see BRAHMAN). Brahman is beyond all attributes and all characterization: but if you conceive of it as possessing attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and sovereignty, then it is God.

Hinduism, however, started as a polytheistic religion and only gradually came to an awareness of Brahman as the eternal ground of all existence. Later still it arrived at the idea that the ground of existence is also the Lord of existence – is God. In an early hymn the question is asked: '*What* god shall we revere with the oblation?' The answer is 'Prajapati, the Lord of Creatures.' But this solution was really no solution at all, for it implies the further question, 'Which of the many gods mentioned in the early scriptures is the Lord of Creation? Which of the many gods is the one true God?' For a time Prajapati enjoyed this honour, but Prajapati came to be identified with the sacrifice, both sacrifice as it is performed in ritual and with the cosmic sacrifice of Prajapati himself which was said to have resulted in the manifestation of this multiple world out of an original unity. At about the same period we find Vishnu too being identified with the sacrifice and therefore with Prajapati, 'the Lord of Creatures'.

In the earliest Hindu scripture, the *Rig-Veda*, Vishnu turns up from time to time but he is quite unimportant. He is the faithful companion of Indra who, during the period of the *Rig-Veda*, was the greatest of the gods, the patron of the Aryans as they swept into India and the chastizer of the aboriginal inhabitants, the god of the storm and of war (see INDIA). The only action attributed separately to Vishnu is his striding out three paces:

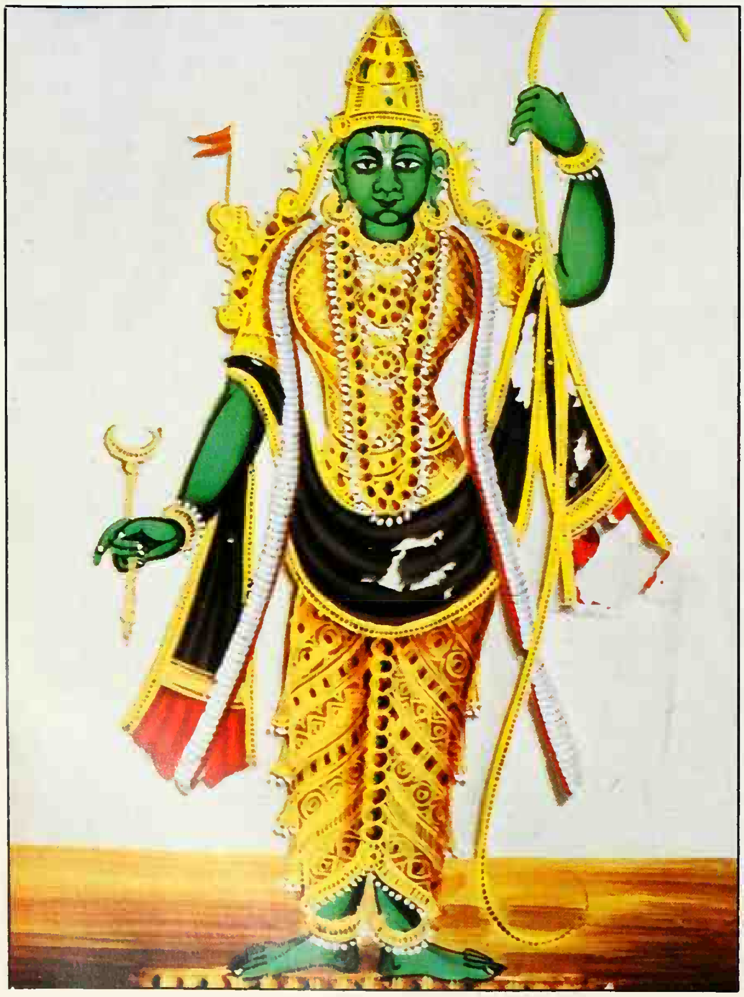
> I will proclaim the manly powers of Vishnu
> Who measured out earth's broad expanses,
> Propped up the highest place of meeting:
> Three steps he paced, the widely striding!
>
> Though one, in threefold wise he has propped
> up Heaven and earth, all beings and all
> worlds . . .
>
> There indeed the widely striding Bull's
> Highest footstep, copious, downward shines.

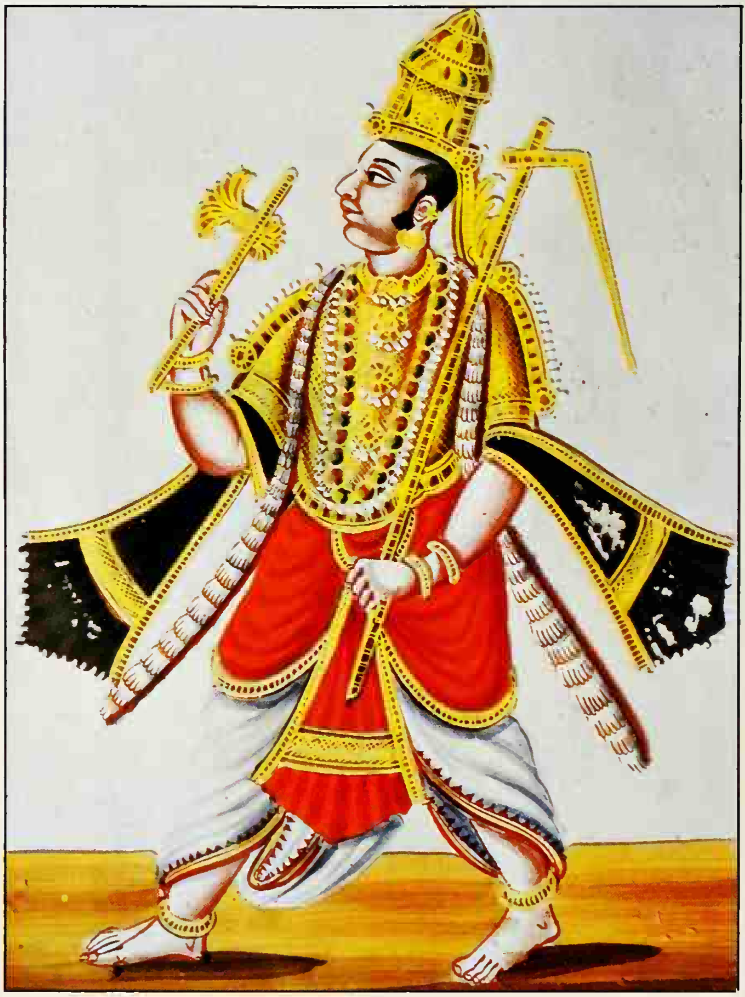
From this hymn it is clear that Vishnu's three paces represent the 'measuring out', that is, the creation of the universe; and his highest step seems to be the sky. Later it was to be identified with Being itself, that is, Brahman or the Absolute.

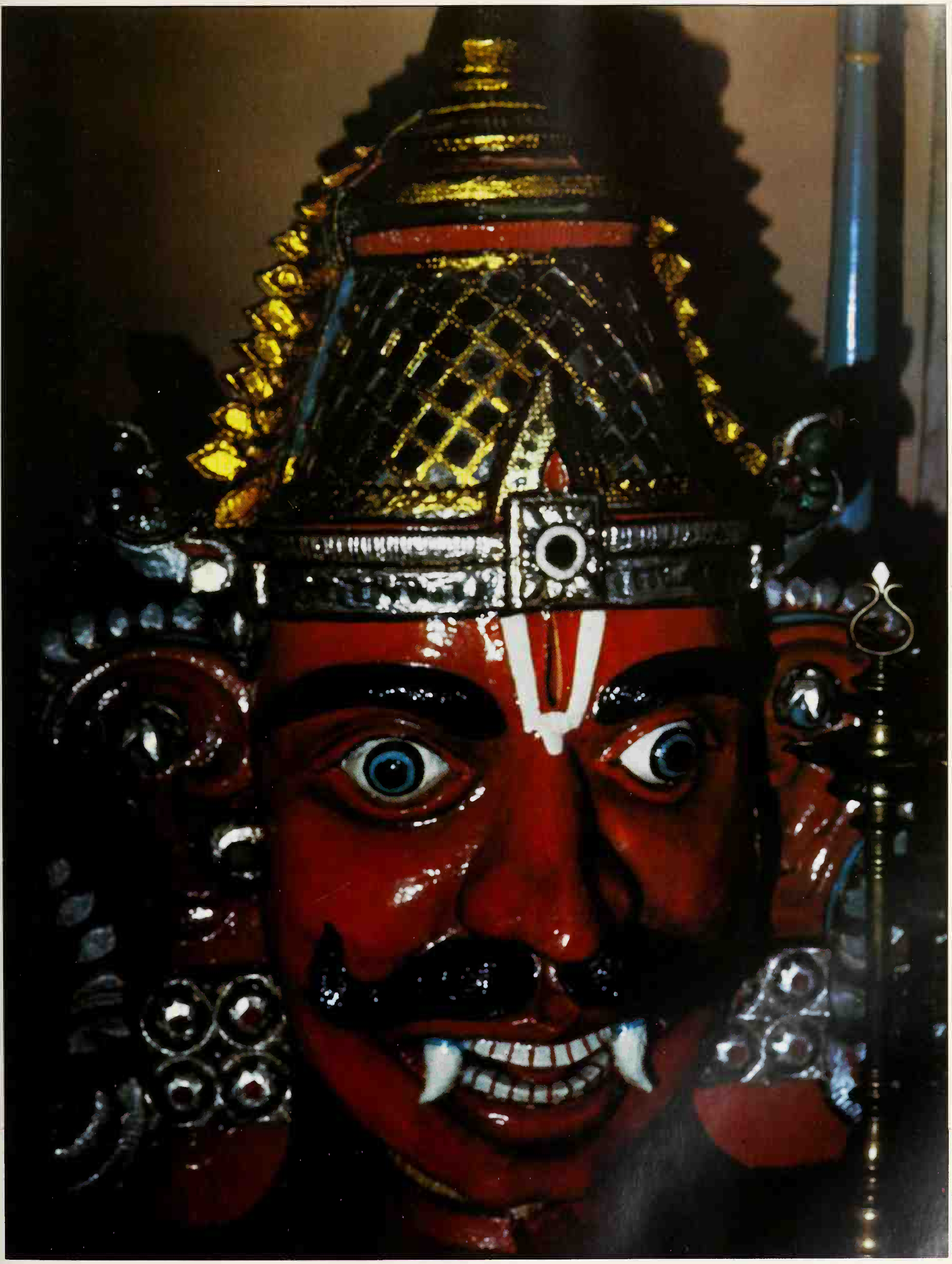
Creator, Sustainer, Destroyer

The seed from which Vishnu developed to his full stature as the supreme deity is already here; but it is a very small seed from which so immense a tree should have grown. It was, however, not the only seed, for the full-fledged Vishnu is clearly the result of the coalescence of many gods, none of which belong to the oldest mythology of the *Veda*. In the course of time he coalesced with Narayana, who appears in a rather later Vedic text as a divine sage who offers sacrifice and 'becomes this whole universe'. In the Great Epic, the *Mahabharata*, Narayana dwells, though invisible himself, in a mythical 'White Island' where he is surrounded by his devotees – strange beings by any standards, since their heads are like umbrellas and they each have four testicles – who revere him alone as the one God and thereby partake of his eternal essence. The cult of Narayana in conjunction with

Vishnu is made real to his worshippers through his ten incarnations ***Right*** Vishnu in his aspect as man-lion ***Below left*** Vishnu as Rama, hero of the Rama Yana who was cheated of his throne ***Below right*** Vishnu as Krishna, the youth whose affairs with the cowherd's daughters are held to be an analogy of the love affair between God and the soul


G. L. Carlisle


G. L. Carlisle



William MacQuitty

'For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers . . . I come into being age after age': Vishnu, in carvings from the magnificent rock temple of Mahabalipuram, south India, 7th century AD

William MacQuitty

Vasudeva is attested by an inscription from the 2nd century BC.

But who was Vasudeva? In the Epic and the *Puranas* (300 BC – 1000 AD) Vasudeva is the patronymic of Krishna (see KRISHNA) whose father was Vasudeva; and this adds a new complication, for the origins of the Krishna cult are even more obscure than the cult of Vishnu himself. By the time of the Epic in which the man Krishna plays a leading part, he is already identified with Vishnu and is his incarnation on earth. As such he delivers the most celebrated of all the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gita* (see BHAGAVAD GITA), in which he explains his own nature as God, reveals himself in a quite terrifying vision as all-consuming Time, shows how he is not only identical with Brahman, the Absolute, but actually transcends it, explains the supreme merit and efficacy of loving devotion to the one God, and also explains the purpose of God's incarnation as man. 'Whenever the law of righteousness withers away,' he says, 'and lawlessness arises, then do I generate myself on earth. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the setting up of the law of righteousness I come into being age after age.'

In the Great Epic, Krishna is Vishnu incarnate, but Vishnu himself, though he appears in most of this enormous poem as the supreme deity, is not undisputedly so. He is Bhagavan, 'the Lord', but in the background there lurks disconcertingly Mahadeva, the 'Great God' Shiva (see SHIVA), whose supremacy Krishna himself acclaims on occasion. The two gods are still clearly rivals, but a compromise is reached whereby the one true God is invoked as Hari-Hara, *hari*, the 'tawny' or 'he who takes away (sin)', being one of the stock epithets of Vishnu, and *hara* the 'seizer' being one of Shiva's. For from the time of the Great Epic until today God has been worshipped by the Hindus either in the form of Vishnu or of Shiva: for the worshippers of Vishnu, Vishnu (and his incarnations) alone is God, for the worshippers of Shiva the same is true of Shiva. In the so-called Hindu Trinity (the Trimurti or 'three-form' of God, consisting of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) Brahma is associated with creation, Vishnu with sustaining, and Shiva with destruction, just as in Christianity, the Father came to be associated with creation, the Son with redemption, and the Holy Spirit with sanctification. This, however, is a purely theological device and in no way influenced the actual practice of the two dominant trends of Hinduism for which either Vishnu or Shiva is the one God who creates, sustains, and destroys the universe in unending cycles of ever-revolving time.

The Creation myth associated with Vishnu is rather naive. At the end of each cosmic cycle Vishnu falls asleep on the cosmic serpent Shesha. When he wakes up, a lotus grows out of his navel and in the middle of the flower Brahma is seated, and Brahma then proceeds with the creation of the universe. Meanwhile the wrathful Shiva emerges from his forehead ready to destroy all that Brahma has created.

Among the followers of Shiva, Shiva is worshipped directly or in the form of his erect phallus; but for the devotees of Vishnu, Vishnu is made real to them through his incarnations or avatars, as they are called in most Indian languages (from the Sanskrit *avatara* meaning a 'descent'). These avatars are either a full incarnation of the supreme God or a partial one. The number of incarnations varies but the generally accepted number is ten. These are incarnations as fish, as tortoise, as boar, as man-lion, as dwarf, as Parashurama ('Rama with the axe'), as Rama-candra, as Krishna, as the Buddha, and as Kalkin who is yet to come.

Heroic Incarnations

The first four incarnations need not detain us although some of them have a respectable antiquity. Vishnu became incarnate as Rama 'with the axe' in order to extirpate the warrior class who had come to challenge the supremacy of the Brahmins, but this Rama is a purely literary character with no cultic significance. Vishnu's incarnation as the Buddha, however, is very surprising and the orthodox explanation that the Buddha's function was to lead astray many from the true faith as formulated in the Vedas is even more surprising. In actual practice Vishnu is worshipped either in his incarnation as Krishna or as Rama(candra), the heroes of the *Mahabharata* and the *Rama Yana* respectively. Of the two cults, that of Krishna is the more emotional, for the object of worship is not so much the Krishna of the *Mahabharata* or the *Bhagavad Gita* as of the youthful and wayward Krishna of the *Puranas* whose love affairs with the cowherds' daughters in Vrindavan are held to be an analogy of the love affair between God and the soul.

The history of the elevation of Rama(candra) to the rank of an incarnation of Vishnu is no less obscure. In the *Rama Yana* (except in the first and last books which are generally regarded as being a later addition) Rama is simply the virtuous hero, the heir-apparent cheated of his throne by a vindictive queen, the faithful husband, and the just destroyer of the demon king who had carried off his wife. But by the time that the *Rama Yana* was refashioned in Hindi by the 17th century poet Tulsi Das, Rama had for long been accepted as an incarnation of Vishnu, and his earthly life (almost entirely mythical) was held up as a model for the ordinary man to follow. Rama had become quite as much an incarnation of Vishnu as had Krishna, and the Hindi form of his name, Ram, had come to mean God. And so it was that Mahatma Gandhi, assassinated by an 'orthodox' Hindu fanatic, died with the name 'Ram' on his lips.

(See also HINDUISM.)

R. C. ZAEHNER

FURTHER READING: Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism* (Routledge, 1964).

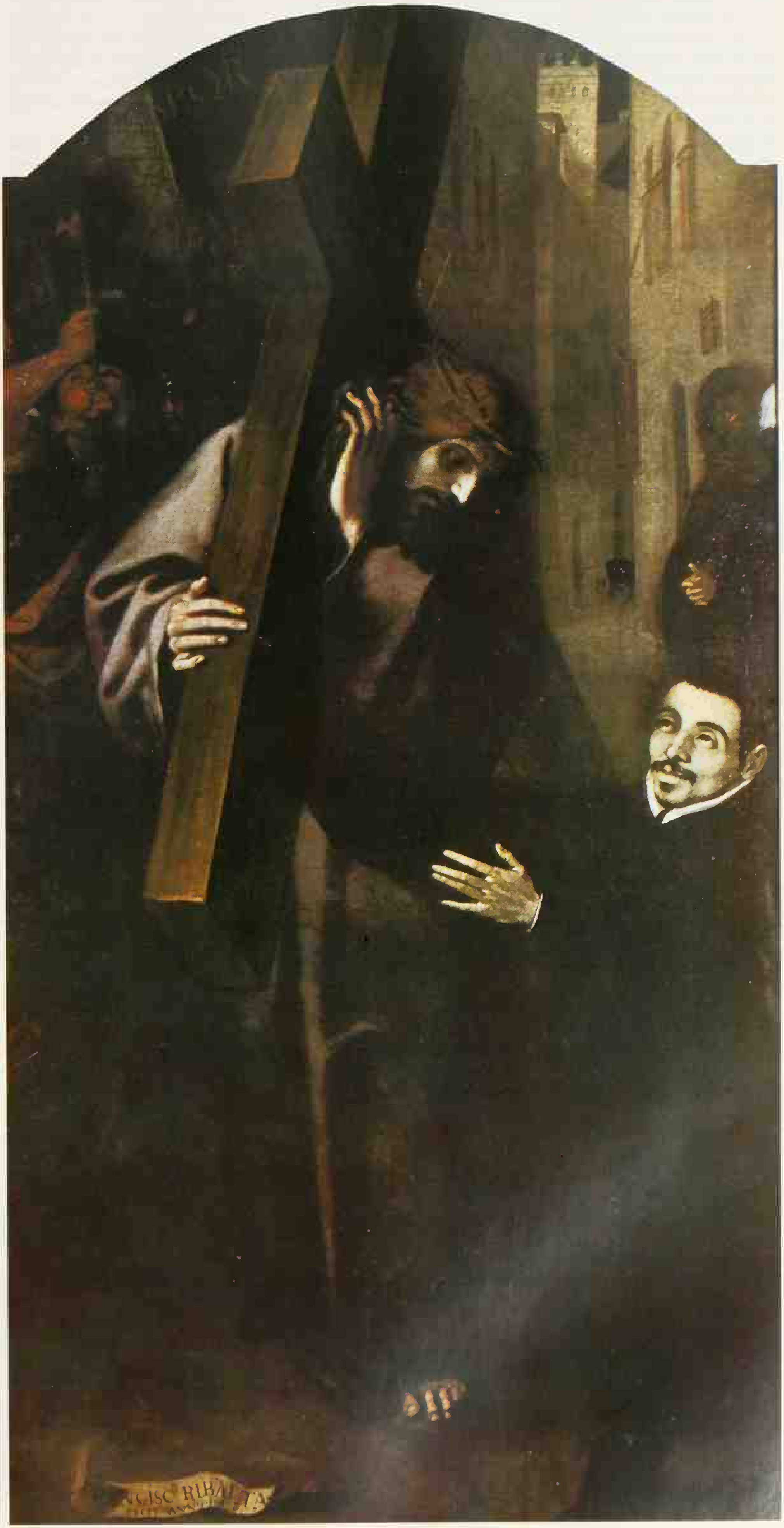
At Limpias in Spain, in 1919, a girl said that she had seen the figure of Christ in the parish church perspire visibly and move its eyes, and between 1930 and 1950 the Roman Catholic Church investigated 300 cases of apparitions to children and 30 sets of appearances of the Virgin Mary: but 'the wisdom of the Church and the teaching of its greatest intellects and holiest saints has made it circumspect'

VISIONS

THE WORD vision is used in the religious sphere to mean what elsewhere is called an apparition. The percipient of an apparition has the experience of 'seeing' (in some sense or other) something which is not present in the same way as ordinary physical objects are. Sir Francis Galton (1822–1911), in his researches into human faculties, encountered a perfect example of an apparition. A lady novelist assured him that she once saw the principal character of one of her novels come through the door and glide towards her. As the character was fictional there was no possibility that the apparition corresponded to any external cause. The experience thus originated within the lady's mind and can be described as *endogenic* (caused from within).

Apparitions are sometimes loosely called hallucinations (from Latin *hallucinatio* – I dream) bearing the implication that they are endogenic. This is because apparitions commonly result from drugs, fever, exhaustion or mental illness. The present writer prefers to reserve the term hallucination for endogenic hallucinations, and to use the word apparition or vision for an appearance whose cause may be internal or external.

Are there in fact any apparitions which are *exogenic* (with an external cause)? Religious visions are difficult to interpret but psychical research provides good evidence of exogenic apparitions (see GHOSTS; HAUNTED HOUSES; SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES). Occasionally, at a time of death or crisis the likeness of the person concerned appears in recognizable form to a friend or relative, perhaps on the other side of the world. The apparitions are sometimes clearly unreal, being transparent or appearing in a 'pool of light' or in a 'picture frame', but quite often they are natural enough to be mistaken for the actual person. Theories differ as to how these crisis apparitions come about. Some writers claim that the person whose apparition is seen has an 'astral body' which is a duplicate of his physical body (including clothes) and is 'projected' to the vicinity of the percipient (see ASTRAL BODY). I prefer an explanation by telepathy or 'thought-transference'; a violent 'thought wave' impinges on some level of the percipient's mind and is translated into a picture of the person in crisis.



The Vision of Father Simon by Francesca Ribalta: Simon was a 16th century Italian aesthete who walked the streets at night meditating on the Road to Calvary; one night he heard trumpets and saw Christ, carrying the cross, turn to look at him

National Gallery

A century ago the Society for Psychical Research carried out a census of apparitions and obtained 17,000 replies to its questionnaire. It appeared that about one person in 16 sees an apparition once in the course of a lifetime. More than one third are of persons living or dead and known to the percipient. It was found also that about one in 30 of all apparitions are of a religious, exalted or highly poetic nature.

A large proportion of apparitions are *hypnagogic* hallucinations (from Greek *hypnos* – sleep) and occur on the borderline between sleeping and waking, being very akin to dreams. Like dreams, these apparitions are mainly endogenic but some may, like crisis apparitions, have an external cause, because there is evidence of telepathic or clairvoyant effects both in dreams and in the hypnagogic state.

All the same, many interesting visionary experiences cannot be reliably distinguished from dreams. They contain revived memories, but in new combinations. If the Jungian and Freudian psychologies are true, hallucinations may also contain symbolic representations of unconscious urges, aspirations or anxieties. This is true of normal people and especially true of the hallucinations of the insane.

Emotion certainly is productive of visions. Carl Jung (see JUNG) speaks of a spontaneous vision experienced as a child while in a choking fit. He saw above him a glowing blue circle about the size of the full moon. Within it there moved golden figures which he took to be angels. Once, when my own father, a sea-captain, was trying to extricate his vessel from a whirlpool and debating whether to change course, my mother's apparition appeared before him on the ship's bridge and told him, with emphasis, 'You will get out if you change course!' – as in fact he did.

A Wavering Rose

Many hallucinations are extremely vivid and lifelike so that, as with some crisis apparitions, the percipient may think he is actually seeing in the ordinary way. But with many visions, particularly in the religious sphere, it is hard to decide from the visionary's words exactly in what sense the vision was 'seen'. Roman Catholic theorists such as St Thomas Aquinas (1226-74) recognized three types of vision; the intellectual vision, the imaginative vision and the corporeal vision. The theory of the corporeal vision was akin to the modern astral body explanation of crisis apparitions. If one had a vision of Jesus, it might be a corporeal vision; one was actually seeing either the resurrection body of the Christ or alternatively a kind of wraith fashioned by the angels. On the other hand, it might be that the percipient received only an imaginative vision – a purely mental image, though a vivid one and induced by the action of God. St Thomas, of course, like all reputable theologians, reserved the possibility of a vision being an endogenic hallucination not divinely caused.

Some people have a remarkable power of mental visualization, so that what they 'see in the mind's eye' can be as vivid as things actually seen. Such exceptionally clear imagery is described as *eidetic* (from Greek *eidos* – form), and is sometimes aided by looking at a plain or dark background. When Goethe shut his eyes and thought of a rose he would clearly see a rosette for as long as he wished, though it wavered a little and moved its petals.

Galton came across a few visionaries who said that they received their visions in two entirely distinct ways. Thus one informant could experience eidetic images at conscious command, but these were vague and shadowy in comparison with his spontaneous visions, which occurred unexpectedly and quite outside his mental control. These visions were of landscapes more strange and beautiful than any he had ever seen in the ordinary way. Such visions which arise, as it were, of their own motion can be called autonomous, but they are not necessarily exogenic. The visions of people with a poetic or literary bent, like their dreams, have an intellectual and idyllic content. In 1944 Jung, who was recovering after a heart attack, would awake at midnight and spend an hour or so in 'an utterly transformed state' as if 'in ecstasy', as he watched unfolding before him various mythical occurrences such as the wedding of the cabalistic beings Malkhuth and Tifereth in the 'garden of pomegranates'.

Ecstasy is a peculiar state which is sometimes entered spontaneously or in the course of prayer or meditation on sublime themes (see ECSTASY). During it the ecstatic person consciously experiences any or all of a variety of thoughts and feelings. Visions are common but there can be also a sense of bliss or of union with the deity or a benign cosmic power. Contact with the surroundings is not always completely lost. Jung could eat his supper and comment to the night nurse on his visions.

One of the most remarkable visionaries of all time, Emanuel Swedenborg (see SWEDENBORG), spoke of three distinct kinds of 'spiritual sight' (apart from dreams). There was vision 'with the eyes closed, which is as vivid as with the eyes open'. At other times, when wide awake and walking in the city streets, Swedenborg would be 'in vision, seeing groves, rivers, palaces and men'. He described his third type of experience as differing entirely from 'the common imagination of men' and as a state 'when those things which are in heaven, such as spirits and other objects, are represented'. Swedenborg believed that he had some kind of direct sight of actual spirits and divine beings in these latter visions which, he said, came to him only when in ecstasy or 'trance'.

The English poet and painter William Blake (see BLAKE) was erroneously regarded by some as mad because of his visions, which he described in poems and epics. Chastised by his mother for seeing the prophet Ezekiel in the garden, at the age of eight he saw 'a tree filled with angels; bright angelic wings bespangled every bough like stars'. It is likely that children experience eidetic imagery and autonomous visions more commonly than adults realize. In Blake's case his visionary faculty expanded to cosmic proportions in adulthood. Once, by the seashore, everything in the world appeared as 'men seen afar'. Eventually all objects fused and combined into 'One Man, the Christ' on whose bosom Blake reposed. When asked about the reality of his visions he replied that he saw them 'in imagination' and, pointing to his forehead, said that he saw them 'in here'. The visions reported by prophets and saints were, he believed, merely poetic.

Numerous visions of divinity have been described by their recipients as ineffable and incapable of expression in words. The German mystic John Tauler (1300-61) said that, 'sometimes the grace is so manifest that it is impossible to doubt that God has actually shown Himself', but '...no [distinct] idea of what has been seen is retained. We cannot understand what it was. Only we know with certainty that we cannot analyse it.' Tauler's comment suggests not only ineffability but, with visions as with dreams, a tendency to forget them. We may suppose also that some visions, like dreams, are subject to the process of 'secondary elaboration' by which they are modified in the recollection. This is to be suspected in the case of such rhapsodical visionaries as Venerable Marina of Escobar (1554-1633) who found herself before the heavenly Jerusalem, which was encircled by an exceedingly vast river. When interrogated by her confessor, Marina declared that her clearness of perception was not much inferior to St Paul's.

Moving Statues

Other mystics have described their experiences in rather different terms. Blessed Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) said that, 'when the most high God comes into the rational soul... and she [the soul] seeth Him within her, without any bodily form... the eyes of the soul behold a fulness, spiritual not bodily'. Such visions seem to be essentially cases of seeing with 'the mind's eye'. However, St Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Jesuits, whose description of his visions can be relied on, perceived 'the Divine Being, not obscurely but in a vivid and highly luminous brightness'.

Loyola distinguished between visions of this compelling sort and 'intellectual perceptions' (that is, mental imagery) which he also had, particularly when gazing into running water. This recalls the German mystic Jacob Boehme (see BOEHME), who once saw a vision in a shining pewter dish.

The factors that seem to be operative – suggestibility, expectancy and narrowing of attention onto a single object – are perhaps adequate to explain some of the famous cases in which numerous observers have seen statues move or weep. In 1919 at Limpias near Santander in Spain, a girl of 12 said that during the sermon she had seen the figure of Christ on the altar of the parish church perspire visibly and move its eyes. Before long the number of daily pilgrims rose to 4,000. The majority saw nothing, but some saw tears in the Saviour's eyes, others blood on the brow, or the head turning. Significantly, most of these prodigies occurred only after the percipients had stared for long hours at the altar.

The Accuracy of Visions

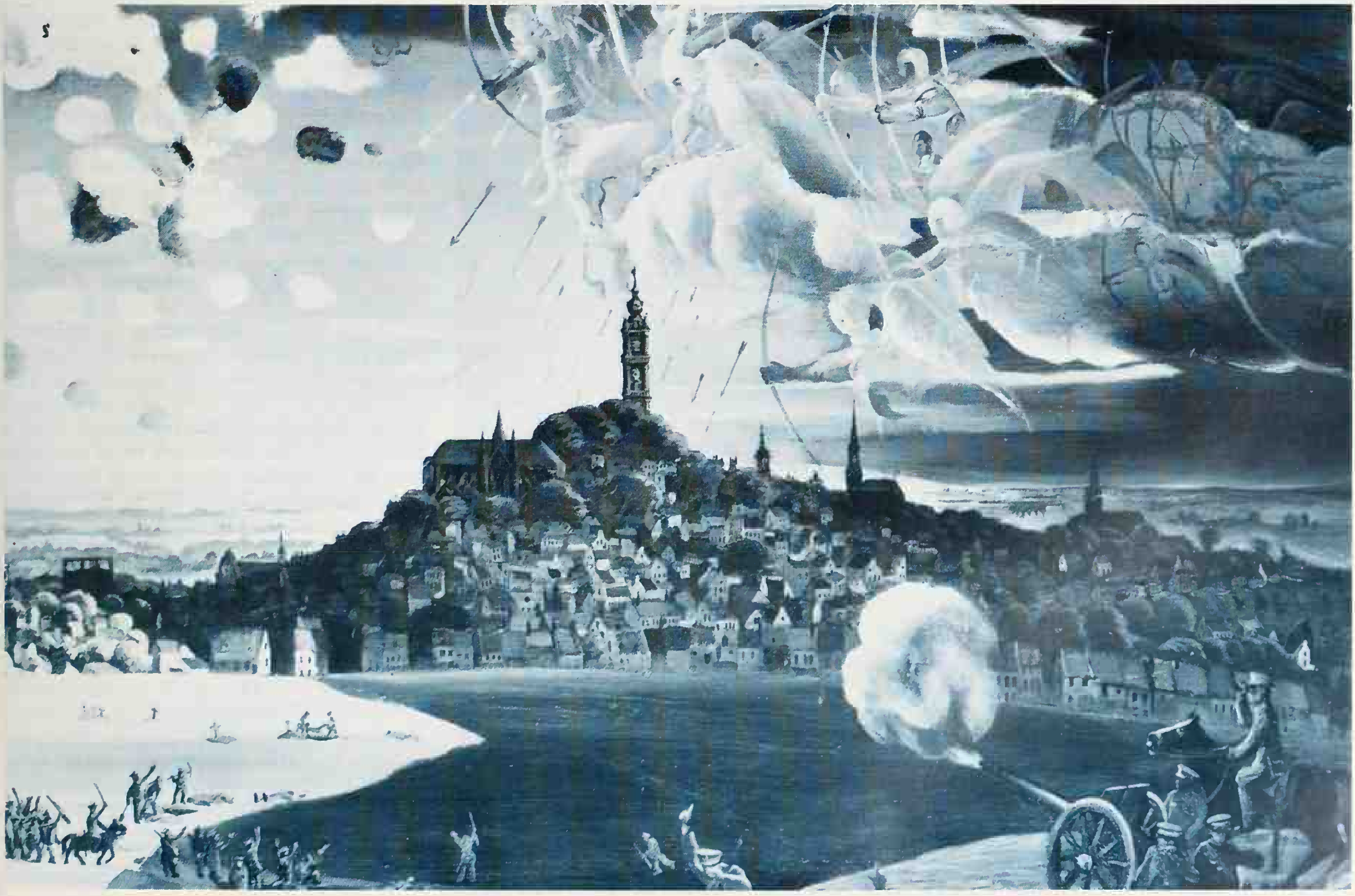
Literary problems arise with the very extensive writings in which a long series of mystical ladies have reported their revelations received during ecstasies. St Bridget (1302-73), patron saint of Sweden, said that our Lord remarked to her that she retouched her visions through not having properly understood them; but he approved her secretaries for adding 'colour and ornamentation'. St Bridget often saw heaven, earth and hell simultaneously, as did St Lidwine of Schiedam (1330-1433) every night for 28 years. The vision of hell had been, of course, a common literary theme ever since Plato wrote the *Phaedo*. Visionaries, one suspects, are somewhat at the mercy of what they have read.

St Hildegard, Abbess of Rupertsberg in the Rhineland, received her scientific knowledge from a 'divine light' experienced in ecstasy since the age of four. Her numerous treatises are, unfortunately, replete with just those factual errors prevalent in the 12th century. Confidence in her treatment of the sapphire or the lodestone evaporates on encountering her scientific explanation of the griffin and the unicorn. St Frances of Rome (1384-1440) failed in astronomy. When she visited the celestial regions in her visions she distinctly saw the sky as a hollow sphere of blue crystal, an admissible idea in the 15th century, but tending to be outmoded even in Spain when Blessed Maria of Agreda repeated the same error in her Mystical City of God. Maria, a woman of intellect and good sense, actually doubted the accuracy of her visions, until her faith became absolute after a visit to the throne of God. The Eternal Father produced a richly decorated book which the Blessed Virgin certified to be her own true history. Maria was gratified to find the text in perfect agreement with her own *Life of the Virgin*. However, the biographical details appear to have been revealed in two earlier books, a *Nativity of the Blessed Virgin* and the *Raptures of Blessed Amadeus*.

The greatest of the mystical doctors of the Church, St Francis de Sales (see FRANCIS) and St John of the Cross (see JOHN) were profoundly suspicious of the accuracy of visions. St John used to quote with some relish the posthumous appearance of St Teresa of Avila (see TERESA) to a Carmelite nun. The great foundress and mystic warned the visionary that the vast majority of visions were untrustworthy. Whether the saint actually returned from paradise is uncertain, but her advice was in character. In his old age, Loyola doubted the validity of his own youthful visions.

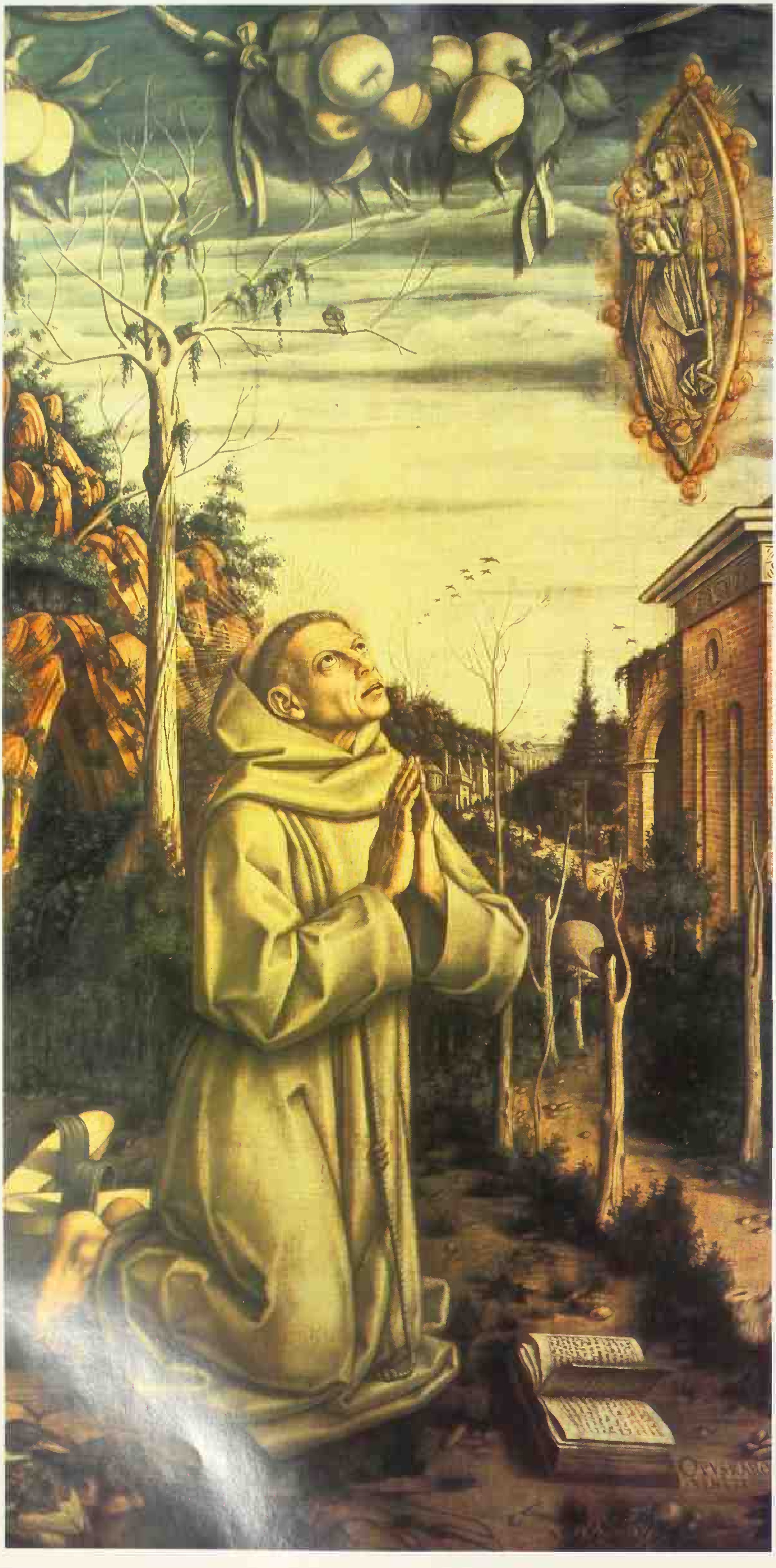
The wisdom of the Church and the teaching of its greatest intellects and holiest saints has made it circumspect. In the 17th century it denounced more than a score of false visionaries. When it specifically approves an apparition or revelation, it does so in terms of a formula laid down by the learned Pope Benedict XIV (1675-1758). Even approved revelations are accorded only the probability of being true, and have at most the credibility 'of human faith according to the rules of prudence', and any Catholic is at liberty to reject or criticize. Discretion is certainly justified, because in Western Europe between 1930 and 1950 the Church investigated 30 series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary alone, and 300 cases of individual apparitions to children. Only three apparitions have been recognized in the present century: Fatima, Beauraing and Banneux, though the Church sometimes authorizes shrines without officially endorsing the visions which have led to their foundation.

It is clear that visionaries often make gross errors in matters of ascertainable fact. And in questions where the truth is not verifiable they are apt to conflict with the Church, or with scripture or with one another. Are they ever right? It is easy to satirize the poor visionaries. But occasionally, it must be admitted, they gather information by other than normal means. Among the reams of unverifiable material that Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) dictated concerning the life of Jesus are many accurate topographical details concerning the Holy Land, including place names. In view of the limited knowledge of Palestine available in Europe in her day, it is hard to see how she could have acquired this information by normal means.



The Angels of Mons were the creation of an English journalist, but many British soldiers came to believe that they had actually seen the heavenly warriors hold back the might of the German army at Mons in 1914: French painting of the event, 1920

Photolensens



The Vision of the Blessed Gabriele, by Crivelli

National Gallery, London

But what of the apparitions of Jesus, or the Eternal Father or the Holy Virgin? Do they represent communications from God or from Mary? From theology we know that the visionary cannot be receiving a direct view of God in the same sense that he sees Mr Jones who lives down the road, because God is unlimited and immaterial. The visionary is therefore either seeing a wraith fashioned by the angels or is experiencing a mental image. In the first case the agency would be supernatural, but there is no real evidence that any visions are 'corporeal ones' in the sense of Aquinas. In the second case the image may be purely endogenic. But this cannot be logically proved to be so.

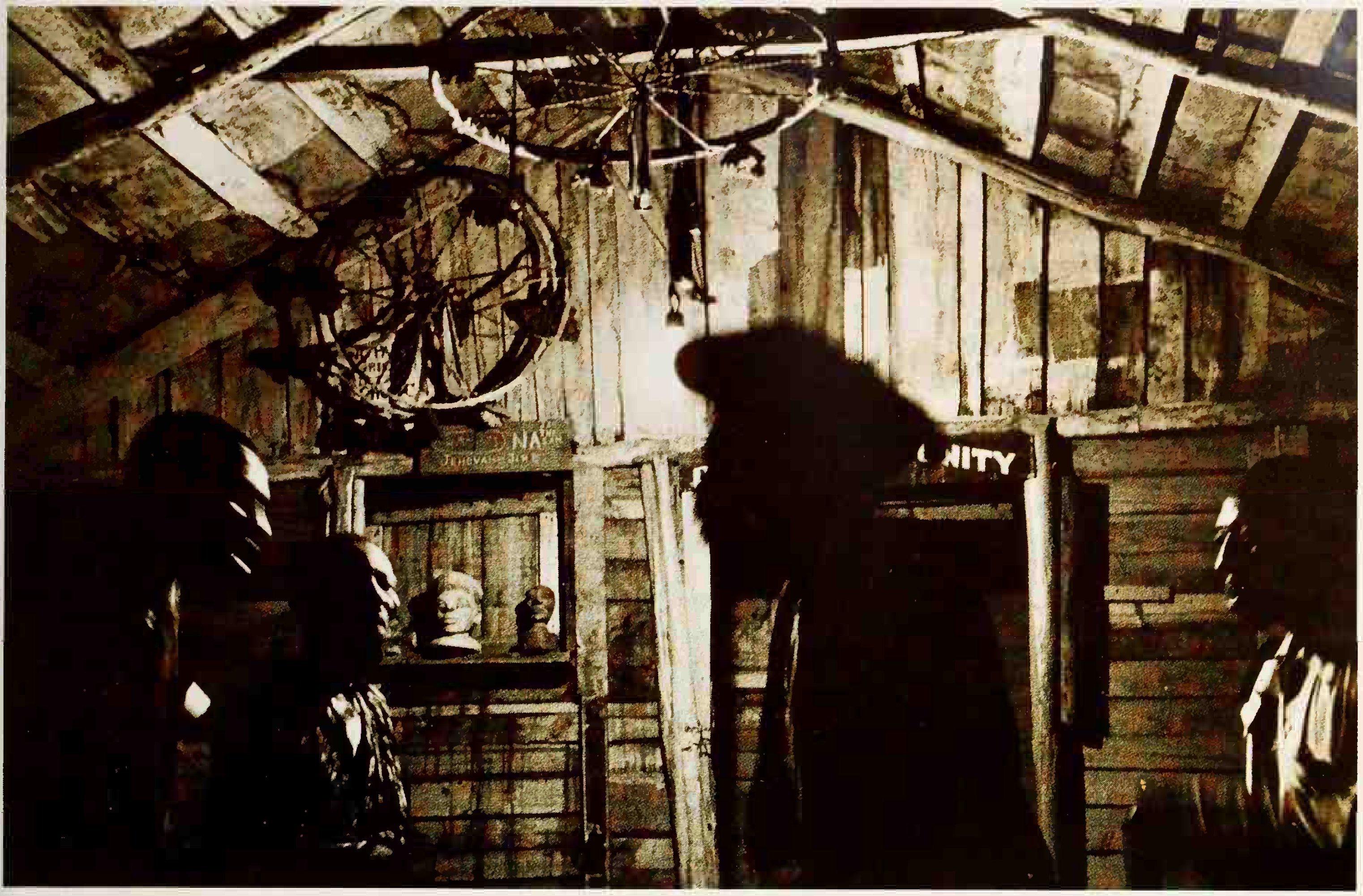
We would be helped in this enquiry if we really knew what value to put on mystic experience in general. The mystic feels a sense of certainty as to the 'truth' of his experiences and a feeling of union with the ultimate power in the universe. These are certainly weights to be thrown into the scales of judgement, but it is difficult to know just what weight to give them. St Teresa, describing some of her feelings of spiritual comfort and assurance while in ecstasy, compared the soul to the silkworm in the cocoon it has spun for itself. And many scholars have wondered if mystical experience is not just this, a comforting illusion which the mind, in spiritual or other travail, spins for itself.

A Matter of Fashion

It cannot be denied that there are 'fashions' in visions. In the Middle Ages visionaries saw saints and martyrs and, in certain limited circles, apparitions of the child Jesus were extremely frequent. Later, visions of the suffering and wounded Jesus or of his Sacred Heart were favoured. In recent times the Virgin Mary has almost monopolized the field. Since Lourdes (see LOURDES) there have been definite series of apparitions occurring at dates announced in advance by the Virgin to her visionaries. On a sceptical view, this conformity of visions to fashion points rather to their being the products of auto-suggestion in harmony with the prevailing climate of religious devotion. But it needs to be said that this argument is something of a two-edged sword if we accept the possibility that a mental impulse, actuated from on high, may be elaborated into a vision from such materials as are available in the mental storehouse of the recipient. Religious psychology is no less replete with subtleties than ordinary psychology, and the present writer would consider it foolish to hasten to a final conclusion concerning the presence or absence of the supernatural in religious visions.

A.R.G. OWEN

FURTHER READING: H. Evans, *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors* (Aquarian Press, 1984); A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (Harper & Row, 1970); C. C. Martindale *The Message of Fatima* (Burns & Oates, 1950); R.C.Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford University Press, 1980).



Herbert List

Pocomania ceremonies in Jamaica parallel Haitian Voodoo, with drumming, chanting and dancing for days on end. The initiates collapse in trances in which they experience the world of spirits. These and similar Caribbean and South American cults are based on African religions

VOODOO

Dissociation, possession by and marriage to the gods are the central facts around which the ceremonies and superstitions of Voodoo are organized; Voodoo treats the 'Invisibles' as powerful enemies to be won over and used, and the supernatural as a disease to be turned to good account

THE WORD VOODOO comes from *vodun*, meaning god, spirit or sacred object in the Fon language of West Africa. It is applied especially to the beliefs and practices found in Haiti, whose inhabitants are, for the most part, descendants of slaves imported from many parts of Africa, and by extension to similar practices in other Caribbean islands, in the Southern states of America, and in Brazil, where plantation slavery was also customary. To Westerners, the word usually denotes black magic and uncouth superstition, such as sticking pins into dolls, casting spells, lighting black candles in cemeteries to Baron Samedi – the lord of the underworld and patron of all black magic – calling up the dead and being familiar with monsters, spirits and zombies. In Jamaica such activities are known as *obeah*, and certainly Haitians are quite familiar with them. However, Voodoo also refers to a systematic religion in which the gods descend and possess their worshippers, and in which the ancestral spirits are invoked to give oracles and to be a power in the household.

These two aspects of Voodoo make a whole, and it is not easy to distinguish between them because superstitions provide a forcing ground for the religion, which in turn supports and develops their meaning. From the start, children are brought up to be good by being made afraid of the supernatural, and this leaves an indelible imprint on the minds even of highly educated people. They are taught not to get their heads wet, especially with dew, because water is both a solvent and a magnet for spirits, and a man's spirit lives in his head. At night, besides, there are bogies about, and doors and windows are carefully closed to keep them at bay. There are some who can get through the thatch: these are the loups-garous or witches who like sucking children's blood, and who are sometimes seen whizzing through the night like fireworks. Midday is another dangerous time, for then no man casts a shadow; which is as much as to say that his soul has temporarily disappeared, and that the air is full of invisible spirits looking for an abode. Children are forbidden to play with their shadows by candlelight, lest they tie them in knots or mislay them. And there is always the *tonton macoute*, the travelling magician with a satchel over his shoulder containing magical and medicinal plants, dried bits of wild cat, black candles and other paraphernalia. Mothers threaten children that, if they are not good, the tonton will make off with them: it is fitting that the name was given to the bully-boys of the Duvalier regime, who terrorised their political rivals.

In such an atmosphere, obeah is used either to counter such hobgoblins of the mind or to make use of them, and its practitioners are medicine men. A 'medicine' in this sense is something with either magical or pharmacological properties, sometimes both. Consider, for example, the treatment given to a child suffering from the attacks of a loupgarou. It is pale, fretful, wasted, and sometimes goes into convulsions. The medicine man – he may be a tonton macoute, a *bokor* (sorcerer) or *houngan* (Voodoo priest) – has thus to kill one bird, and he does it with two stones. He discovers who the witch is – usually a relative or a neighbour who is jealous and resentful of the mother – and works a magic to protect the child and send the magic back to its creator. But he also doses the child with castor oil, because intestinal worms can produce convulsions in young children. The child gets better, the mother is relieved, the witch confesses, and the poisonous atmosphere is dissipated.

Picturepoint London

The Great Good Angel

The object of magic is to affect the soul, either of the victim or of the persecutor. The soul is called the *gros bon ange*, the great good angel, and is manifested in the shadow and the breath. It coexists with the *'ti bon ange*, the little good angel, which is equated with the penumbra, the spirit, the conscience – it is sometimes also called the zombie. Both inhabit the *corps cadavre* or corpse body. The weak element in this ensemble is the gros bon ange, without which the other two elements lose contact. It is easily infected by emotions, especially those of suspicion, resentment, envy, anger and lust, by sudden shocks such as a death in the family, a failure in business or being jilted. It can also be stimulated by the casting of spells, the use of magical powders or of complicated pieces of apparatus called *wanga*. For instance, a girl being courted will try to 'hook' her man by serving him dishes in which she has put a piece of bacon she has worn in her shoe for three days running, or her nail and hair clippings, even her menstrual blood. If she is cold towards him, he may discreetly blow on her a powder composed of dried hummingbird flesh and a large number of potent herbs. If she is living with another man, however, he will first use a powder called 'break the household', which causes quarrels. To defeat an enemy he can have recourse to another kind of leaf powder, often containing dead men's bones and cemetery earth, and held to cause paralysis, blindness, impotence or death. Smearing the door of an enemy's house with human dung causes much anxiety; to dig up the bones of his father's corpse (as happened to the late President Duvalier) is even worse, for highly sophisticated kinds of black magic and necromancy can be performed with them.

Magic is nothing less than an underhand intention given symbolic form and used to create an expectation in its victim. There are two dangers in using magic, however. If improperly used, or sent back by a strong magician onto its perpetrator, it can cause what is called a 'shock in return'. On the other hand, it may be so powerful that it needs constant attention. The entity embodying this kind of magic is called a *baka*, and the owner of this supernatural monster must be prepared to offer it the life of one of his relatives every year unless he is to be devoured by it himself. Bakas are greedy, and are used by greedy men to gain power and money: the service they require shows that paranoia is not far in the offing.

Paranoia is defined as a form of insanity marked by fixed delusions, especially those of grandeur, pride and persecution. On one level it can be said that its most innocuous form is the common sulk, or what Haitians call *mauvais sang*, bad blood, caused by a failure of expectation and authority, and with a plentiful admixture of suspicious resentment. It sometimes becomes so involuted that a *saisissement* or seizure results, whereupon a magician or Voodoo priest is called in to diagnose and treat the disorder. The diagnosis is usually straightforward, and the main treatment is to wash the patient's head with water in which seven or 21 leaves of different plants have been shredded. This cools the head and brings the gros bon ange back to its proper place; a counter-magic is employed to influence the person the sulker is involved with.

But sometimes the diagnosis and treatment are both at fault, and the victim is left to his mania until, if he is lucky – which he frequently is – he has a vision in which his malady is personified as a spirit. The spirit prescribes a remedy for the illness, such as a diet of charred maize and water, but remains with the patient even when the cure is completed. For it also gives a formula by which it can be invoked in the future, such as looking at a candle flame, or reciting the Pater Noster backwards seven times; and this allows the patient to set up as a small-time oracular priest or priestess, diagnosing and treating illness and performing black and white magic for a fee.

The case histories of these Voodooists show that disordered emotions of long standing can be precipitated by an apparently trivial incident. A man may smoke a

Left Scene from a Voodoo ceremony, photographed at Port au Prince in Haiti: in Voodoo belief, magic and superstition are inextricably enmeshed with a systematic religion *Right* Baron Samedi, the greedy and lascivious king of the Voodoo cemetery spirits, who is dominant on All Souls' Day, when he possesses women who flock to the graveyards

Popperfoto

cigarette or drink a cup of coffee given him by a neighbour he has long mistrusted and who has given him a meaningful glance: he goes off in agitation, becomes hysterically dissociated and vomits up such unlikely emblems of his discomfort as lizards, pieces of bark, or a large and poisonous centipede. This is equivalent to a possession, and the vomiting brings him back to himself. He then puts what he has vomited in a bottle and tops it up with rum. It becomes his guardian spirit and oracle, while the liquor can be used as a universal medicine for those in need of treatment. Other sufferers vomit up needles, which they later use in their magical practice, swallowing them when the spirit leaves them in readiness for the next occasion. Still others go sleepwalking and pick up interestingly shaped stones to which the spirit leads them. These stones are placed in saucers, hot rum is poured over them and set aflame, and the liquor again used as a medicine – usually as embrocation. What happens in these and similar cases is that the gros bon ange has externalized its infection, which is then used homoeopathically to treat the infections of other sufferers.

Possession by the Loa

Initiation into Voodoo follows a parallel course, under the guidance of a priest and in the context of a traditional rite. There are several reasons for being initiated. The novice may be suffering from a saisissement, or from a series of calamities in his daily life, which the priest diagnoses as coming from the *loa* (gods), if he has failed to observe his religious duties. Equally, the illness or calamity may be sent on him by his dead parents, whose souls have been 'living in the waters of penitence' and have finished their term there: the duty of their descendant is to bring them up out of the waters and install them upon the family altar. His persecutors are now not the living, who can be countered by black magic, but the dead and the loa: the Invisibles, in fact, who are the principles of grandeur, pride and power, and who are only propitiated by a man changing his own attitude to life. If the Invisibles plague men, therefore, they do so because they also represent the unused faculties and energies which exist in everyone behind the bars of repression, and which make themselves felt when the agent of this repression has died. Initiation into Voodoo not only placates the Invisibles, but transforms them from repressors of desire into helpers for action.

The process of initiation the world over is the undergoing of a mock death followed by the experience of a rebirth (see INITIATION). In Haiti, a not uncommon rider is added, that the death is preceded by an illness, and the rebirth is seen as a cure. The state and future of the novice is diagnosed in terms of the entity plaguing him. If his ancestors are calling upon him to serve them, he can only do so if he serves the loa also.

The problem then is which loa he is to serve. There are for a start several nations of loa, so called because they originated as gods of the various African tribes whose members came to Haiti. Slavery mixed these tribes so well that their descendants all came to be Haitian, and only the gods retained their nationalities. These nations are called Rada from Dahomey, Wangol from Angola, Siniga from Senegal, Congo, Ibo and Naga; there is also an indigenous nation, the revengeful Petro loa, who appear to stem both from the aboriginal Indian population of the island and from the slave population. Families tend to serve the same nation of gods, each of which is a pantheon. The novice may already know which loa destiny has devoted him to, or the priest may have to diagnose it by examining the novice's disorder and matching it to the known character of a suitable loa.

The loa are in fact character patterns which can be seen working both in man and in Nature: Ogoun the blacksmith god, for instance, is a martial demiurge whose hammer is a thunderbolt, and who controls the head of those who are strong-minded. But he may also patronize those who resent strong-mindedness in others, according to the adage: 'The character of the loa is that of his mount.' In either case the loa is invoked to settle a disorder and to lay the foundation for future development, for an initiate may become possessed by many loa during the course of his life.

Once accepted for initiation, the novice has to buy the magical and ritual apparatus for the ceremony, and during one week he goes nightly to the preparatory rites. During these, songs and prayers are intoned which speak of the time of misery which is passing, of the spirit unsheathing itself from the body, of the novices as patients whose cure will benefit the dead, and of the mapou tree, haunt of evil spirits, being felled by the blows of the rite; and interspersed with these songs and prayers is the frequent exclamation: 'There is malice, oh!' On the last evening their heads are washed, and on the Saturday morning they are formally inducted into a room where they will be secluded for another week. The songs at this time speak of the novices being saddled ready for the loa, like a horse for its rider, the usual phrase describing a possession. Strips of palm leaves are shredded to protect and master the novices: these strips are called *aizan* after a female loa said to be a traitor and a cannibal. A song and a rite to Grand Bois, Great Tree, is performed, the novices are turned brusquely till they are giddy and then thrust into their chamber.

Inside, they lie upon their left sides eating white foods such as are offered to the dead; they learn more passwords and secret gestures, songs and prayers, their heads are again washed with leaves, and everything is done to prepare them for a possession by the loa on whose 'point' they are lying. The next Saturday, fowls are sacrificed and parts of them placed in a *govi* or ritual pot together with the novice's hair and nail clippings, and his gros bon ange is transferred into the govi. In the temple, cauldrons are set up over small fires and a mixture of flour and oil boiled inside them. The novices are carried out swathed in white sheets, a lump of the boiling mixture is pressed into their hands, and their arms and legs are passed through the flames. They return to their seclusion until the Sunday morning, when they come out barefoot, dressed in white, collars of beads about their necks representing the loa, and hats on their heads to protect them from erring spirits. They are seated at a table under a white sheet, are baptized with a leaf dipped into water and given their new names in Voodoo. The drums strike up, they dance, and the loa possess their new servants.

After 40 days, during which they are forbidden to wash or change their clothes in order to absorb the force of the ritual, they and the priest go into a dark room where he calls up the spirits of those ancestors they wish to serve. Curious flapping sounds are heard as he draws these souls out of the waters of death, and they are made to speak through the ventriloquial medium of the priest, then they are placed in the govis reserved for them, which are also passed through the flames of a fire to heat them and give them life. These govis, together with the one containing the gros bon ange, can either be kept by the initiate or given into the safekeeping of the priest. The novice is now called a *hounsi canzo*, literally, the initiated spouse of the god.

Initiation by Fire

The novices were brought in. There was a turmoil at the door of the seclusion hut, as the hounsis struggled to get through the crowd – for each novice is hidden under a white sheet and has to be carried on the back of a hounsi, as limp as a corpse...

Idem attended to them in turn. She smeared her hands with cold oil, took the novice's left hand from beneath the sheet and smeared that too. Scooping a handful of the now seething mixture from the zin she pressed it into the novice's hand and closed the fingers over it, for four or five seconds. The père savanne peered anxiously over Idem's shoulder, his candle still alight.

This is the central moment of initiation, when the novice is made to grasp heat without flinching – a heat which will sear the flesh only if the loa are displeased through some lapse on the novice's part. For the nature of the loa themselves is fire, and it requires much courage and preparation to support them.

From one to another of these crouching figures Idem moved, lit by the small fires till all was finished and the novices were humped back through the crowd like unwilling dragons. The pots were now emptied and a mixture of rum and oil brushed onto them, inside and out. Oil was poured into the fires below till ribbons of flame towered into the air, each pot a crucible for some gros-bon-ange. Back the novices were called, still carried by the hounsis, their arms and legs seized and passed through the blaze...

A hounsi called Zett became possessed. Sobgwe, a thunder loa, took her, and she whirled, radiantly good-natured, about the centre post. Idem became possessed: now peering round with staring eyes and nostrils, as Ogoun; now with eyes shut and eyebrows raised, one hand touched the thatch above, as Louis André, the spirit of her grandfather; now as Brave Tonerre Crase, with hunched shoulders and a lengthened jaw working lugubriously under a hollowed face; or as the Baron, an intimate, self-satisfied death.

Francis Huxley *The Invisibles*

These rites accomplish a number of different things. They emphasize the misery and malice of the world and the sickness of the novice. Seclusion allows this sickness to be incubated, and to hatch out as a loa which becomes the master of the novice's head. His gros bon ange is separated from him and placed in a govi, and so are the spirits of the dead, much as a centipede is put into a bottle of rum: this means that he is protected from further infection and can make use of the spiritual principles involved through ritual forms. He becomes familiar with the complicated rites of Voodoo and becomes one of a congregation. Finally he learns how to endure the fear of dissociation and the pain of possession.

Dissociation at first is not a pleasant experience, being heralded by giddiness, the unstringing of the limbs and the mounting to the head of a nauseating darkness. It can be brought on in an uninitiated person by the atmosphere of a ceremony, and he will stagger about as though in the throes of a saisissement without being fully possessed by a loa. This state is often personified by the loa Grand Bois, a violent and speechless entity who can only grunt and gibber, and is referred to in the song about the felling of the mapou tree with its cargo of evil spirits. In the initiation of priests, the novice is made to stand with his back against the central post of the temple, down which the loa are held to come when they are invoked. This post is sacred to Legba, guardian of the passage between this world and the other, and he is sometimes called Legba Grand Bois Chemin, Legba the Path of the Great Tree. This tree is also equated with the backbone. But for the loa to come down this tree, its guardian, the gros bon ange, must be displaced. In ritual terms it occupies the nape of the neck, and physiologically it is represented by a large number of postural reflexes which affect the eyes, the neck, the spinal column and the heartbeat. Subvert these reflexes by suggestion, theatricality, rhythm, dancing, drumming and strong emotions, and dissociation sets in, the body falling like a felled tree. But after training, the dormant energies represented by the loa can inhabit the place the gros bon ange has vacated, and the body is held upright around the central post sacred to Legba. This is to be possessed by a loa, who though they live in water are fiery by nature; and to test the novice's ability to contain this influx of energy without going mad, he is made to grasp a boiling paste and to have his limbs washed by flame.

Spouse of the God

The term hounsi, spouse of the god, is also significant. In Haiti, lack of social organization starts in the family; women long to be married properly but all they usually achieve is the status of a common law wife, or *placée*. At regular marriages the bride is received at her husband's home by a group of young girls singing Catholic verses against Voodoo and *plaçage* whose refrain goes: *'pas placée, pas placée!'* – meaning properly married. Some women do not even become placée but turn *jeunesses*, good-time girls who have a financial understanding with their lovers, or even *bousins*, prostitutes, and they will often turn to Voodoo to keep their suitors' ardours aflame, to procure abortions, or just to maintain a clientele. They, and womanizing men, excuse their behaviour by saying it is the loa who make them do it, who prevent them from marrying or from keeping a partner more than a week or so. Many of them are overtaken during sleep by erotic dreams in which the loa possess them sexually, with such sweetness that they will have nothing to do with love-making for days afterwards. Curiously enough, women are often made love to by Erzulie, the goddess of love, who comes to them in masculine form – thus it is not surprising to find that many of them indulge in homosexual play as well.

The sexuality of the loa produces saisissements of a particular kind. At ordinary dances, for instance, it is not unknown for a man to be overwhelmed by the sexual advances of the woman dancing with him so that he falls to the floor in an orgasmic dissociation. The proper treatment for this, as for nocturnal visits by the loa, is to set one or two nights apart for them every week, when the sufferer sleeps alone. If he or she is married and the spouse objects to such an interruption of his pleasures, a full-blown saisissement may well erupt with disastrous results. But even if this does not happen the loa may be so pressing in its attentions that it demands to be married in proper style. This occurs at a Voodoo temple where the loa is invoked to possess an attendant, the marriage ceremony is performed with the human spouse, rings are exchanged, and a document drawn up and attested.

These marriages do not always stop the lecherous behaviour of the human spouses – sometimes, indeed, it seems they encourage it, by giving it a religious justification. Priests are certainly not above using sexual magic for their own advantage, for instance by always lying on their backs when they make love, in order to be possessed in the act of possession. It is also said that they sleep with their novices during the initiation rites, though this probably is pure slander. What does often occur is that the priest uses his position to sleep with the women of his congregation, who are by no means averse to his attentions, and that priestesses, who often started in life as jeunesses, use their old arts to enlarge the circle of their faithful. In addition, the hounsis, who have made the temple the centre of their life and attend all the rites as singers and dancers, frequently act as temple prostitutes and indulge in small perversions among themselves. This is logical enough if the hounsi is a spouse of the god, and if the temple is the god's house. A consequence, very much to the advantage of the priest, is that he can bring pressures to bear on those with whom his hounsis sleep, who also provide him with a deal of interesting gossip which he can turn to good advantage when he has to diagnose an illness.

The loa most often concerned in these marriages are perhaps Ogoun and Erzulie. But underlying all these matters is Guede, a collective title for the cemetery spirits whose king is Baron Samedi. The Baron is the first person to be buried in a churchyard – his female counterpart is called Maman Brigit – and Guede was the first soul to be drawn up out of the waters of death by Legba. Though he can and does appear at any ceremony, being a greedy and tricky spirit whose prerogative is to devour the offerings made to any loa before they get at it, he is dominant on All Souls' Day, when he possesses a large number of women who go flocking to the cemeteries in his honour. They dress in black and purple, sing coldly

Like Voodoo, Brazil's Umbanda cult involves possession by spirits, drum beats, candles and healing: Umbanda worshippers at Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro, on New Year's Eve

lascivious songs and, using a stick as a mock penis, dance the banda. This dance is highly suggestive and combines sexual fascination with a scorn for pleasure and wilful contempt of love.

That women are the especial mounts for the Guedes at this moment suggests that they are getting their own back against the men who usually dominate them. It also shows the close and universal connection between death, magic and sexuality. It is one of the priest's duties to control this power, and he does it by means of the *asson*, a gourd rattle filled with pebbles, snake bones, earth from a cemetery and magical powders, and circled by a network of coloured beads and snake vertebrae. With this instrument he can command the dead and bring them out of the waters, he can inflame and control the Guedes, and he can master the living by beating out the rhythms which the drums then pick up and to which the attendants dance.

In theory, the use of the asson should go together with the gift of a spiritual power known as *la prise des yeux*, the taking hold of the eyes. This allows the priest to remain conscious while the loa possess themselves of his being, unlike minor initiates who black out when they are ridden and who have no memory of what they did when possessed. The state is marked by a sensation of weight on the neck or shoulders, and a feeling of enormous power: the priest can hear the loa whispering in his ear, and he is endowed with second sight and other paranormal powers. So, at least, say those who have undergone la prise des yeux and those who have witnessed its effects, and it may be that their claims are sometimes justified.

Dissociation, possession, marriage to the gods and la prise des yeux: these are the central facts around which the many and diverse ceremonies of Voodoo are organized, and the superstitions also.

Voodoo treats the Invisibles as enemies to be made friends of and powers to be used, and the supernatural as a disease to be turned to good account. To do so the priest must use his left hand as well as his right; that is, he must know as much about black as about white magic, and keep both in the context of the religion. What he does is sometimes cruel and often alarming, besides being mystifying in the good and bad senses of the word. But then the gods that the magician serves are jealous as well as powerful, and those who enter their mysteries must expect to pay the price.

(See also DAHOMEY; POSSESSION; SOUTH AMERICA; TRANCE; ZOMBIES.)

FRANCIS HUXLEY

FURTHER READING: Wade Davis, *The Serpent & the Rainbow* (Warner, 1985); Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen* (Dell Publishing, 1972); F. Huxley, *The Invisibles* (Humanities, 1966); A. Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (Schocken, 1972).

Peter Larsen

Peter Larsen

Voodoo has its origins in the spirit possession cults of the old Slave Coast of West Africa *Above left* Figures of spirits on sale in a Dahomey market *Left* Pupils emerge from a school of instruction in tribal customs and religions, again in Dahomey

Wagner's operas have exerted a powerful influence on occultists, who have regarded him as a 'natural magician' and a 'Gnostic saint': he has been credited with an intuitive grasp of the principles of sexual magic, and one enthusiast translated the names of Wagner's characters into Hebrew to find important numerological formulas

WAGNER

'LORD OF LIFE and Joy . . . . . . though adored of us upon heaths and in woods, on mountains and in caves, openly in the market-places and secretly in the chambers of our houses . . . we worthily commemorate them worthy that did of old adore thee and manifest thy glory unto men, Lao-tze and Siddartha and Krishna and Tahuti . . . and these also . . . Thomas Vaughan, Elias Ashmole, Molinos, Adam Weishaupt, Wolfgang von Goethe, Ludovicus Rex Bavariae, Richard Wagner . . .'

So reads the Collect for the Saints in the Gnostic Catholic Mass written by Aleister Crowley (see CROWLEY) for his followers. At first sight it may seem surprising that Crowley included Richard Wagner in his rag-bag collection of Gnostic 'saints' – others were the Borgia pope, Alexander VI, and a syphilitic and eccentric 15th century Lutheran named Ulrich von Hutten – but Wagner's indebtedness to Nordic myth, legend and mystical interpretations of Christianity has convinced many occultists that the great composer was one of their own number. Sar Péladan, the French magician, novelist and poet, who broke away from the Kabalistic Rose-Croix of Stanislas de Guaita to found his own Catholic Rose-Croix of the Temple and the Grail (see BATTLE OF BEWITCHMENT; ROSICRUCIANS), made a pilgrimage to the Wagner festival at Bayreuth and was so deeply affected by his attendance at a performance of *Parsifal* that thereafter he not only claimed that Wagner had possessed 'the soul of a natural magician' but insisted that from now on his own novels must be referred to, not as novels, but as *wagneriennes*. Other occultists have made even more extravagant claims. Aleister Crowley's disciple Frater Achad (Charles Stansfeld Jones) wrote that: '. . . Wagner himself had received Instruction in the great Principles of the Holy Order from certain of the Secret Chiefs and this accounts for the great harmony between his Work and that of other members of the Great Brotherhood.'

Wagner was born at Leipzig in 1813; officially, he was the son of Karl Wagner, a petty bureaucrat who had risen to the command of the Leipzig police. There is some reason to suppose, however, that he was in reality the offspring of an illicit liaison between his mother and Ludwig Geyer, a portrait painter, actor and dramatist who had for some time been a guest in the Wagner household. Karl Wagner died of typhoid six months after the child's birth, and in the following year his widow married Geyer – significantly enough, she gave birth to a daughter only six months later. The young Richard was brought up in Dresden as Geyer's son and did not adopt the surname of Wagner until his confirmation at the age of 14.

As a boy, Wagner seemed more interested in the theatre than he did in music and it was not until 1828 that he began the serious study of composition; just two years later his work achieved its first public performance – a fiasco – when an overture composed by him was played in the Leipzig Hoftheater. This work has not survived, but its most notable characteristic, apart from the unusual physical appearance of the score – brass appeared in black, strings in red and woodwind in green – seems to have been a ludicrously *fortissimo* drumbeat every fourth bar, productive of intense and, at every repetition, increasingly hysterical laughter from the audience.

Harshness and Compassion

If so many contrary emotions can be brought so intimately into relationship by the music, the implication is that the grievousness and the resignation, the harshness and the compassion, belong to one another. Evil is not a foreign body which some clever surgeon of morals can neatly excise; it is a part of ourselves which we have to learn to live with. Grief is not a poison we can vomit out of the system; it is an ingredient in human experience which we have to assimilate. We can accept all this, and still be in love with life, which we cannot really be if we merely repudiate the darker side of it.

Robert Donington *Wagner's 'Ring' and Its Symbols*

Politics and Exile

Throughout his life Wagner enjoyed melodramatic fiction and as a young man fell under the spell of English Gothic novels in German translation; even in his last years he re-read with enjoyment the occult thrillers of the English novelist and occultist Bulwer Lytton (see LYTTON). According to Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Wagner was particularly fond of *Zanoni* and *A Strange Story*. It was with *Rienzi*, an opera derived from Lytton's novel of the same name, that Wagner achieved, in 1842, the public acclaim that had eluded him 12 years before. *Rienzi* was followed by *The Flying Dutchman*, first produced in 1843 and found perplexing by its audience, and in the same year its composer achieved a temporary financial security as Director of the Dresden Opera.

Wagner, who is sometimes seen, probably incorrectly, as an arch-reactionary and an important formative influence on the ideology of Nazism, was deeply involved in the German revolutionary-democratic movement of 1848–49 in spite of the fact that he was, as Director of the Opera, an official of the Royal Court of Saxony. Wagner's relationship with the Court had become strained in 1847 when he had submitted to the Intendant of the Opera – an amiable aristocratic bureaucrat who had previously been in charge of the Department of Woods and Forests – a memorandum calling for a radical reform of all aspects of Saxon musical life. The memorandum was pigeon-holed for a year and then rejected; simultaneously Wagner was informed that as a mark of royal displeasure the first performance of his new opera *Lohengrin* was to be indefinitely postponed. Wagner, annoyed that his suggestions should be disregarded, rewrote his memorandum in stronger form, demanded the abolition of the office of Intendant and, in May 1848, joined the *Vaterlandsverein*, a society whose objects included universal suffrage, a united Germany and the abolition of the Saxon monarchy. Wagner was an enthusiastic advocate of this programme and read a paper to the society, later published in its official journal, calling for a republican Saxony.

In May 1849 civil war broke out; Wagner fought (briefly) on the barricades and a provisional government was declared, but enjoyed only a brief existence before it was snuffed out by the combined efforts of Saxon and Prussian troops. Evidence of Wagner's involvement in (as distinct from his sympathy with) treasonable activities was scanty and it was not until May 1850 that he fled Saxony after a warrant had been issued for his arrest.

For the next 11 years Wagner was an exile, living at various times in Paris, London and Zurich, usually in poverty – for while he earned considerable sums his expenditure always exceeded his income – suffering from violent headaches and the eczema that had plagued him since childhood, and always longing for a return to his beloved Germany. But these unhappy years of exile were also years of great artistic achievement. *Das Rheingold*, the first part of *The Ring*, was completed in 1854; *Die Walküre* in 1856; and *Tristan und Isolde* in 1859.

Wagner's exile ended in 1861 but, dogged by creditors and unpaid debts, his life was still far from happy. He was actually in hiding from debt collectors when, in 1864, he was summoned to Munich by Ludwig II, then aged 19, the spendthrift, homosexual and half-mad king of Bavaria – another 'saint' of the Gnostic Catholic Church. Within six weeks of his arrival at Munich Wagner was one of the young monarch's principal advisers: '. . . the young King', wrote Wagner, '. . . resolves to give me all that I require in this life; I in return do nothing but compose and advise him. He calls me two and even three times in one day; talks to me for hours, and is . . . devoted heart and soul to me.'

From 1864 until 1876 Wagner received considerable, although often erratic, material support from Ludwig II. The first two parts of *The Ring* were performed at Munich in 1869 and 1870, and the score of the third part *(Siegfried)* was completed by the beginning of 1871. By the end of that year Wagner had decided that no existing German theatre was really suitable for the staging of *The Ring* and that he would himself build one at Bayreuth.

By almost superhuman exertions, supplemented by a loan from Ludwig II, Wagner managed to build his theatre and to stage, in August 1876, all four parts of *The Ring*: the last part, *Götterdämmerung*, had been completed in the previous year. In spite of the fact that this performance, the first Bayreuth festival, resulted in a loss, a second festival took place in 1882, and in July and August of that year there were 16 performances of *Parsifal*, Wagner's last opera, at Bayreuth. Wagner died, of heart failure, in 1883.

Blind Forces

It has been said of Wagner that 'he invented little but adapted much'. Certainly this was true of his plots, and it is his reliance on traditional 'supernatural' material that, coupled with the emotional appeal of his music, largely accounts for the esteem in which he has been held by occultists. Significantly enough, it has been those works in which Wagner drew most heavily from myth and legend – the cycle of *The Ring*, *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal* – that have held the most fascination for occultists and even a brief examination of them gives some indication of the way in which Wagner managed to transmute unpromising material into great art, and to select those incidents in a story that should be left out in its re-telling.

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Richard Wagner at Triebschen, in 1868: the operas in which he drew most heavily on myth and legend are those which have particularly fascinated occultists

Jessie Weston has summed up this selective aspect of Wagner's genius: 'the original stories . . . were too full, too complicated, for dramatic representation . . . Wagner selected those incidents which would tell most effectively on the stage, re-combined them so as to preserve (in some cases restore) the original simplicity of the story, developed the characters, and grasped with unerring instinct hints of his predecessors which, superfluous for the epic, were big with possibilities for the dramatic form . . .'

Wagner took the story of *The Ring* from a Scandinavian source, the older and so-called 'poetic' Edda. The German version, the *Nibelungenlied*, is a 13th century compilation derived from material of much earlier date and bearing much the same relationship to subsequent German poetry as the *Iliad* bore to the literature of classical Greece (see NIBELUNGENLIED). It is odd that Wagner, that most German of musicians, relied principally upon the Icelandic source, making very little use of the *Nibelungenlied* except in *The Twilight of the Gods*, the last part of *The Ring*.

The world of *The Ring* is the world of the Nordic gods, not the world of Christianity; we are in a doom-laden universe, completely lacking in free will, moving inevitably towards the predestined collapse of order and the triumph of chaos – the veritable Doom of the Gods (see SCANDINAVIA). The primitive feeling that all living things are subject to the mindless play of blind forces is terrifyingly re-created.

The Budding Staff

While *Tannhäuser* is a much earlier work than *The Ring*, historically and theologically it comes between *The Ring* and *Parsifal*; in the former we are in the world of the old Teutonic gods, in the latter we are in the world of mystical Christianity, and in *Tannhäuser* we see the conflict between the old faith and the new. There are many surviving medieval ballads of Tannhäuser, and their basic plot is simple enough. Tannhäuser spends a year with Venus in her pleasure-gardens beneath the mountain known as the Venusberg; repents, leaves, goes to confession and is told that only the Pope can absolve him. He travels to Rome on pilgrimage and is told by the Pope that God will not forgive him until his dry pilgrim's staff bursts into leaf; immediately it puts forth buds, leaves and flowers – moral, the forgiveness of God is infinite.

Wagner transformed this simple and trite story into a conflict between earthly love and paganism on the one hand (represented by Venus) and heavenly love and Christianity on the other (represented by Tannhäuser's sweetheart Elizabeth). Only when Tannhäuser, rejected by heaven and earth alike, chooses the dead body of Elizabeth in preference to the delights of Venus does the staff burst into flower – forgiveness is achieved through love and death.

There are many versions of the story of Parsifal, but Wagner relied exclusively on that of Wolfram von Eschenbach (see PARSIFAL) and retold the latter's version of the knight's quest for the Spear and the Grail with great fidelity. *Parsifal* bears more resemblance to a mystery play, a religious rite, than it does to a conventional opera, and Wagner regarded it as such, refusing to let it be performed except at Bayreuth.

The Swan of Ecstasy

Throughout the present century, Wagner's operas and writings have exerted a considerable, although sometimes hidden, influence on many of the more intellectual occultists. While a few of them have been attracted by the more repellent aspects of Wagner's personal philosophy – the followers of the German mystagogue Lanz von Liebenfels (see NEW TEMPLARS) elevated Wagner to the status of a Teutonic guru and folk-hero, not because of his music but because of his antisemitism – most have found Wagner's use of myth and legend attractive in itself and also surprisingly compatible with their own interpretations of occidental esotericism. Theodor Reuss, a practitioner of sex-magic (he was Crowley's predecessor as chief of the *Ordo Templi Orientis*) and an ardent Wagnerian, looked upon Wagner as a sort of intuitive sex-magician and attached a sexual symbolism to the Spear and the Grail of *Parsifal*.

Crowley himself also found much of occult significance in *Parsifal* and, to give only one example, regarded the swan shot by Parsifal as symbolizing that ecstasy which is the ultimate goal of the magician. He wrote: 'There is a Swan whose name is Ecstasy . . . In all the Universe it alone is motionless . . . Motion is relative: there is Nothing that is still. Against this Swan I shot an arrow; the white breast poured forth blood. Men smote me; then perceiving that I was Pure Fool, they let me pass. Thus and not otherwise I came to the Temple of the Grail.'

Link With the Cabala

The fascination of *Parsifal* for occultists has been a perennial one: at least one follower of Rudolf Steiner (see STEINER) looks upon it as a brilliant exposition of the doctrines of anthroposophy. But the most ingenious and perhaps the maddest occult exegisis of it was made by C. S. Jones, in his book *Chalice of Ecstasy*, published in Chicago in 1923. His basic thesis was that Wagner had been either a great cabalist or, quite literally, inspired. In any case the important thing was that *Parsifal* was a vehicle conveying important cabalistic secrets. When the names of the principal characters were turned into Hebrew (each Hebrew letter has its own numerical value), they added up into important numerical formulas. Thus the name of the evil magician Klingsor added up to 333, the number of 'that mighty devil' Choronzon, whom Aleister Crowley had evoked to visible appearance in the Sahara Desert. Even more important, Monsalvat, the mountain of Salvation, added up to 666 – clear proof of Wagner's inspiration and Aleister Crowley's divine mission. These were only two of Jones's cabalistic discoveries; there were many more, and those who care to read *The Chalice of Ecstasy* will find out for themselves the answers to such recondite problems as the occult significance of the destruction of Klingsor's garden, and the reason why the flask from which oil is poured on Parsifal's feet should be shaped like a female breast and stoppered with a ruby. (See also TRISTAN.)

FRANCIS KING

FURTHER READING: Derek Watson, *Richard Wagner* (Schirmer Books, 1981); W. H. Hadow, *Richard Wagner* (AMS Press reprint). Jessie L. Weston, *The Legends of the Wagner Drama* (Nutt, London, 1896); for an interpretation of *The Ring* in Jungian terms, see Robert Donington, *Wagner's 'Ring' and Its Symbols* (St Martin, rev. edn., 1969).

A. E. WAITE

Mansell Collection

A SELF-PROCLAIMED MYSTIC whose theories have become accepted occult doctrine, Arthur Edward Waite was born in 1857 in the unromantic Brooklyn area of New York. Soon after his birth his mother returned with him to England, where she became a Roman Catholic; and Waite was to remain under the influence of Church ceremony all his life. He considered himself to be a late developer, not having reached 'intellectual puberty' at 21; and he passed through a succession of enthusiasms before arriving at the occult by way of Spiritualism and Mme Blavatsky's book *Isis Unveiled* (see BLAVATSKY).

In 1881 Waite discovered the writings of the French magus Eliphas Levi (see LEVI), and his first 'occult' work (1885) was a digest and codification of Levi's teaching. The year before had seen the publication of A. P. Sinnett's *Occult World*, with its account of the miraculous phenomena produced by Mme Blavatsky. Waite joined her Theosophical Society at a time of great fluttering in the occult dovecots and when the newly-converted Annie Besant was in the first flush of her theosophical enthusiasm (see BESANT; THEOSOPHY). In theosophical circles Waite met other prominent occultists, including Edward Maitland of the Hermetic Society, W. B. Yeats, and the writer Arthur Machen who remained a lifelong friend. With the theosophists, Waite's connections became increasingly tenuous until he finally refused the post of Librarian at the Society, because of his inability to accept the existence of Mahatmas (see MAHATMAS; MASTERS).

It is not with Theosophy that Waite's name is chiefly linked, but with ritual magic as practised in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn under the direction of S. L. Macgregor Mathers and Wynn Westcott (see GOLDEN DAWN). Waite made two ventures into ritual magic, but it was not his true vocation. The first time he entered the Golden Dawn he passed through the grades of the First Order, but resigned on the suspicion of questionable legal practice on the part of his superiors. Some years later he rejoined the Order in a period of dissension among its members, and contrived to gain control of the Golden Dawn's Isis-Urania temple (mother-lodge in London), whose ceremonies he entirely rewrote from the point of view of Christian mysticism.

From his encounter with cabalistic magic, Waite derived one lasting source of inspiration: the idea of the soul ascending the Tree of Life towards the Godhead (see CABALA). But he came more and more to distrust 'occult' practices, and there was little love lost between him and the posturing Mathers, who claimed to admire Waite's poetry, but proved most suspicious of any attempt to encroach on his personal province of the mystical. Waite's chief concerns became Freemasonry and the charting of a 'Secret Tradition' underlying alchemy, masonry and the Cabala, expressed in the 'Hidden Church of the Holy Grail', a mystical body of the elect contained in and concealed by the Christian Church. Whereas his early belief – recorded in 1891 – was that magic could provide the solution to the problems of 'the origin and destiny of Man', his mature conviction of some 20 years later was that the place of the Seeker was within the Church, 'that body in which the work of regeneration takes place'. His poetry is forgotten, his vaunted scholarship seems both tedious and defective, and his chief legacy is his conception of an all-pervasive secret tradition.

JAMES WEBB

For centuries ferociously persecuted by Church and state for their unorthodox interpretation of the Bible, the Waldenses have survived into the 20th century by sheer faith and courage

WALDENSES

A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY which has had its focus in the Cottian Alps on the borders of France and Italy for nearly 800 years, the Waldenses (also Valdenses, Valdesi, Vaudois) have been given various labels. They have been thought of as the forerunners of St Francis because they were originally mendicant preachers; as the forerunners of the Baptists because of their views on infant baptism; as the forerunners of the Bible-Reading Movement because their founder had the New Testament translated into the vernacular; and as the forerunners of the Reformation because they emphasized the authority of the Bible and vigorously opposed the worldliness of the Roman Church and many of its practices. That they have survived the centuries can be largely attributed to the nature of the territory in which they settled: the mountain valleys which debouch into the plain of Piedmont about 30 miles west of Turin are inhospitable and isolated; thus the region afforded seclusion, assisted flight and hindered attack.

Claiming a geographical derivation *(valles densae)* for the name of the sect, some historians asserted that the community was founded by St Paul during a pause in a journey from Rome to Spain (see Romans 15.28). This theory was discredited in the middle of the 19th century after critical examination of the available manuscript evidence.

Renouncing a Worldly Life

It is now generally thought that the community was founded towards the end of the 12th century by Peter Waldo, a wealthy Lyonnaise merchant, businessman and money-lender, who was abruptly converted to religion. By one account, he was startled

The Waldensian pastor of Prali walks to church before dawn; Prali is a village high in the Italian Alps and the spiritual capital of the Italian Waldenses, who after suffering some 500 years of persecution are now able to practise their faith in peace

into appreciating the uncertainty of life by the sudden death of a friend; by another, the spiritual richness of evangelical poverty was thrust upon his notice by the chance hearing of the legend of St Alexis sung by a wandering minstrel. The son of wealthy Roman parents, St Alexis parted from his wife during the post-nuptial festivities, forwent his inheritance and thereafter lived a life of great piety and extreme asceticism.

Whatever the truth, Peter Waldo asked a pious scholar the surest way to God. He received the answer given by Jesus to the rich young man: 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor . . .' Waldo, too, had great possessions; but he was neither sad nor went away grieved. Only setting aside sufficient money to pay for a translation of the New Testament and other theological writings into the Provençal dialect, he paid his creditors, provided for his wife, portioned his daughters and placed them in the care of the Abbess of Fontrevrault, and spent the last of his money buying food for the starving poor of Lyons. Thereafter, dressed in the manner of the Apostles, he tramped the countryside, preaching wherever he went and begging his daily bread. He studied the New Testament intensively, interpreting it in the light of his private judgement.

Waldo soon attracted followers, who copied his example of penury and evangelism. The literate read the gospels regularly; the illiterate learnt them by heart, sentence by sentence, chapter by chapter, book by book. As their numbers increased Waldo sent them out as wandering preachers, two by two, men and women alike. From their profession of poverty and city of origin they became known as the 'Poor Men of Lyons', and from their custom of wearing sandals, 'Sandaliati', 'Insabbatati', 'Sabbatati' or 'Sabotiers'.

At that time the Church forbade all private translations of the Bible as well as preaching without licence. Inevitably, the Archbishop of Lyons prohibited the activities of the Poor Men of Lyons; whereupon Waldo decided to carry the matter to Rome. The Pope, Alexander III, wavered. At first he received Waldo as a favourite son and gave him a solemn embrace; then he refused to licence him; and finally, in 1179, approving the Waldensian vows of poverty, gave permission to preach, subject to the approval of the archbishop. That approval was withheld, whereupon the Poor Men, declaring proudly that they ought to obey God rather than man, ignored the papal injunction and continued as if nothing had happened. The Church replied with excommunication and in 1184 the Waldenses were anathematized by Pope Lucius III in a decree issued from Verona.

The Waldenses dispersed. Colonies and small cells were established throughout Europe, but the main body of the heretics, as they now were, took refuge in an isolated corner of the Alps. There they found other sects, reported to number 17, who were also opposed to Rome. In 1212 the Waldenses made a second approach to the papacy. It was ineffectual. In 1218 a conference of all the demonimations lurking in the valleys was held at Bergamo, and from it emerged the Valdesian Society or Associates of Valdes. The Waldenses now became known in French as the Vaudois and in Italian as the Valdesi.

Barbarous Cruelty

In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council decreed the extermination of the Waldenses, together with the Cathars (see CATHARS). In 1230, although thousands of heretics had by then been butchered, Pope Gregory IX initiated a decade of fierce armed attack against the settlements. In 1233, he instituted the Inquisition to destroy the remnants of heresy and appointed the Dominicans as the official Inquisitors for the south of France. Relentless and ruthless, the 'Hounds of God' besmirched their early history by their cruelties.

In the following centuries the persecution of the Waldenses, alternately by the Church, the king of France and the duke of Savoy (the last two urged on by the pope) was in no way abated. Thousands of martyrs were burnt at the stake; French and Irish mercenaries marched into the valleys and slaughtered many hundreds of men, women, and children.

In the 17th century the barbarities eached such a height that international oncern was roused and voiced. Cromwell ent letters, written in Latin by Milton vho also composed a sonnet *On the late Massacre in the Piedmont*, to the Duke of Savoy, and sent a special commissioner, Sir Samuel Morland, to investigate the Bloudy Massacre, 1655' and 'the barbarous nd horrid cruelties'. Despite this, the alleys were depopulated when in 1686 ouis XIV, following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, ordered the Duke of Savoy o compel the Waldenses to adopt Roman atholicism. Thousands were carried away nd imprisoned in Turin, all their property eing confiscated and handed over to Roman atholics. Four years later a mere handful, nder the command of the heroic Henri rnaud, pastor and historian, struggled ack to their homeland.

In the 18th century life in the valleys ecame easier as physical persecution vaned, though spiritual liberty was still ll but denied. The kings of England joined vith other European monarchs in granting nnuities for the support of the pastors and he maintenance of schools. From 1816 nwards gradual concessions were made ntil 1848, when Charles Albert, King of Piedmont, gave them political and religious ights equal to those of their Roman Catholic ellow subjects.

Rejecting the House of Lies

rom the beginning the Waldenses were a nissionary society, though with increasing umbers it became impossible for all to reach. They became divided into two lasses, on the same pattern as the Cathars, he laity known as the *amici* or *credentes*, nd the pastorate known as the *perfecti*. The pastors were all expected to undertake nissionary work and, still travelling two y two, they made long journeys, undeerred by the likelihood of martyrdom. taly was their main, though far from only, ield. Congregations were established in all he principal towns and elsewhere in the eninsula, and those in Florence, Rome, Naples and Venice numbered several thousand each. There are thought to have been pproximately 40,000 Waldenses in the alleys and Piedmont alone in the middle f the 16th century.

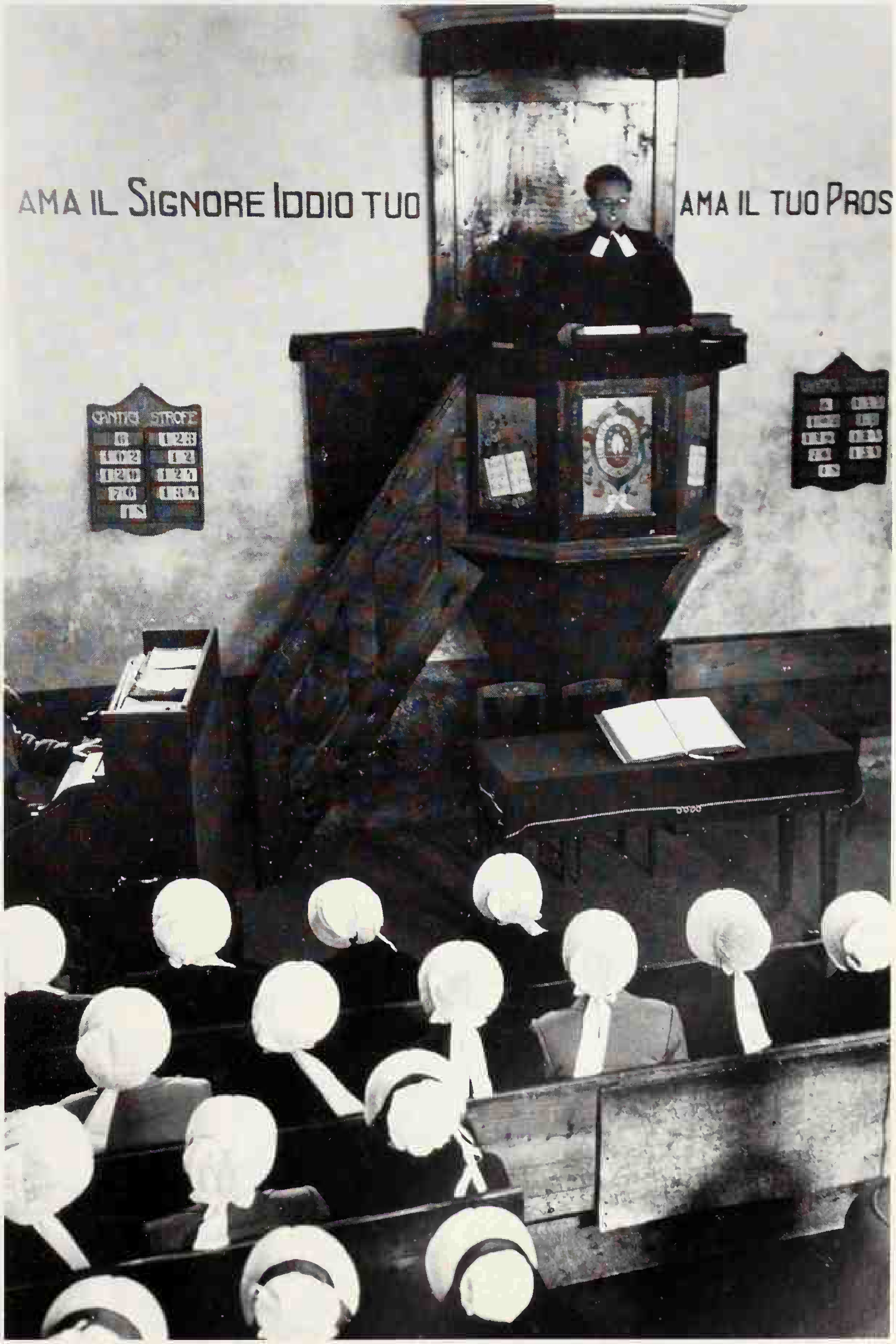
The Waldenses held that the authority of he Bible is supreme, and that anything not uthorized by it is fabulous. They further said that the Bible should be understood ccording to its exact wording and not ccording to any doctrine or tradition of the Church of Rome or to the glosses of popish scholars.

They maintained the vital doctrine of ustification through grace, holding that God bestowed grace because of his nature rrespective of the worthiness of the ecipient. Infant baptism they declared to be of no avail. They held that matrimony is freely open to all: for nowhere in the New Testament is it forbidden – some of the Apostles were married – and God has left it to each man's discretion. Some of the pastors married in order to show approval of matrimony; but the greater number remained single because of the hazardous nature of their calling.

They threw off the authority of the Pope and the bishops generally, though good bishops (that is, bishops who modelled their lives on the Apostles) were to be obeyed. They argued that the Church, admittedly originally the true Church, had been seduced by the Donation of Constantine (a document transferring temporal power from the Emperor Constantine to the papacy, which was in the 15th century proved a forgery) and was now corrupt and a house of lies, with the Pope as the 'Head of Error'.

They denied the power of unworthy priests either to consecrate or absolve, holding that in each case the ability to do so lay in the merits, not in the ordination, of the ministrant. They held that a pious layman or laywoman could in the case of necessity administer the sacraments or hear confessions, and that the sacraments could be consecrated in the vulgar tongue since sanctification has the same effect in the vernacular as in Latin.

The Mass, beyond the words of consecration, they thought to be worth nothing because neither Christ nor the Apostles ever



The Waldenses held that the authority of the Bible is supreme, and that it should be 'understood according to its exact wording and not according to any doctrine or tradition of the Church of Rome or to the glosses of popish scholars': Waldensian service at Prali

Federico Patellani

sang any liturgy in celebration of the Lord's Supper. They declared that the plainsong of the Church was no more than the barking of dogs and that any merit lay in the words rather than the melody. One Lord's Prayer, they said was of greater efficacy than many Masses.

They abominated all those matters that venal priests turned to personal profit, such as the granting of indulgences, the invocation of the saints, alms, Masses and prayers for the dead. They thought the doctrine of purgatory (see PURGATORY) to be without warrant, saying that after death there were but two roads for the disembodied soul – either heaven or hell. They reprobated all practices not expressly approved by the New Testament, believing the use of crosses and ornaments in churches and the adoration of images to be idolatrous; benedictions, dedications and pilgrimages to be vain and superfluous; and holy water ridiculous. They denied the lawfulness of capital punishment, oaths and the bearing of arms; though on the latter points their views had to be modified later in order to prevent the total destruction of the sect. Some of the Waldenses refused to worship in churches, deriding them as mere heaps of stones, and quoting Acts 18.24: 'God . . . does not live in shrines made by men.'

At the Reformation the Waldenses gravitated towards Calvinism. Their great synod held in 1532 at Chanforans, above the Angrogne valley, at which they decided to join the Reformation and the family of Reformed Churches, was attended by Guillaume Farel, preacher in Geneva and subsequently friend of, and assistant to, Calvin. Also present was the scholar Olivetan, who three years later produced for the Waldenses a second translation of the Bible, this time in French. At a council held in 1559 the Waldenses adopted a new Confession of Faith, of a Calvinistic type.

Today the Waldensian Church is a member of the Reformed and Presbyterian Alliance and the Federal Council of Protestants. It is flourishing, and there are Waldenses in the valleys, throughout Italy (where in 1965 there were about 35,000 members with 115 churches), Switzerland and the south of France, whilst emigrants have carried the faith throughout the world. There are ten overseas congregations, five in Uruguay and two in Argentina with about 20,000 communicants between them, and one each in the states of Texas, Carolina and Missouri. The Church is governed by a synod, and the moderator, who presides over the executive committee, is elected for one year only (though he may be re-elected annually for a maximum term of seven years).

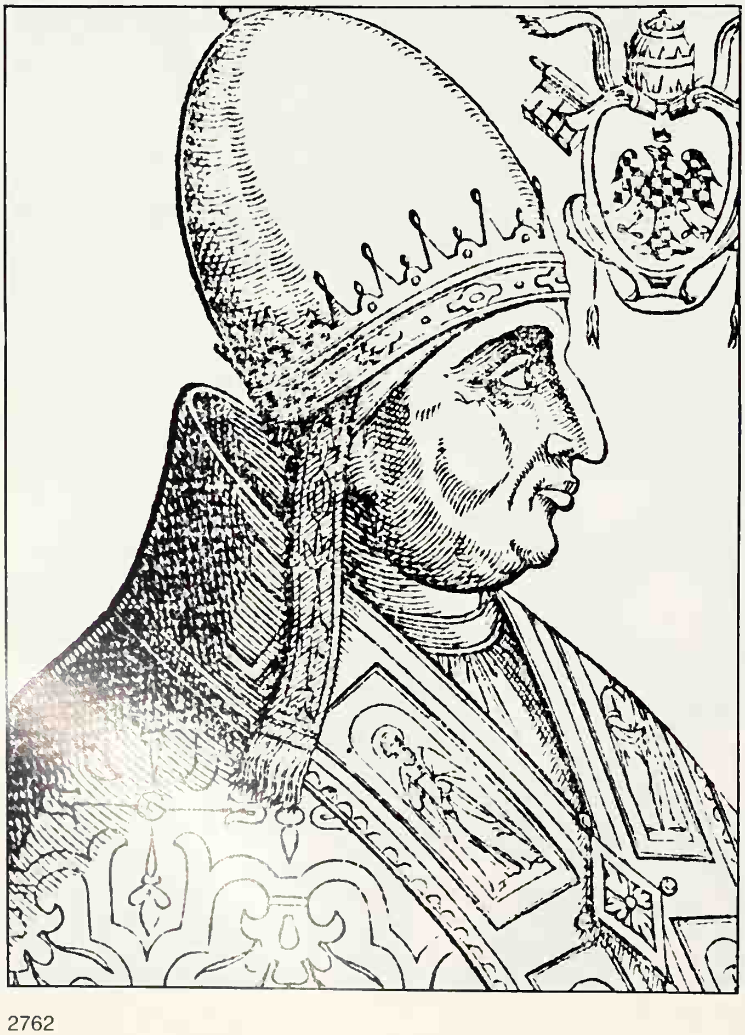
The miracle of the Waldensian survival was undoubtedly grounded in glowing faith and immense physical courage. Ingenuity may have helped. It was argued by Harold Bayley (in *A New Light on the Renaissance*) that they, with one or two other pre-Reformation Protestant sects, derived great encouragement and strength from their ability to keep in touch with one another without the knowledge of the Inquisition. He maintained that the watermarks in paper were often emblems of religious faith and were used to 'flash signals of hope and encouragement to exiles in far distant countries . . .'

If watermarks were so used, why not other symbols? One tradition suggests that the Waldenses were the originators of the Tarot (see TAROT), the pack of cards with 22 trumps of mysterious design used for fortune telling by many and the game of *tarocchi* by a few. Whilst its origins are not certainly known, it is worth noticing that the earliest documentary evidence of the Tarot is dated c 1450, that is to say at the very same time when pressure on the Waldenses was at its height. Speculation suggests that these trumps were used by the pastors as visual teaching aids, that they were carried as part of the full pack and in consequence were easily explainable to the Inquisition, and at safe times were brought out as texts for sermons and reminders of points of faith.

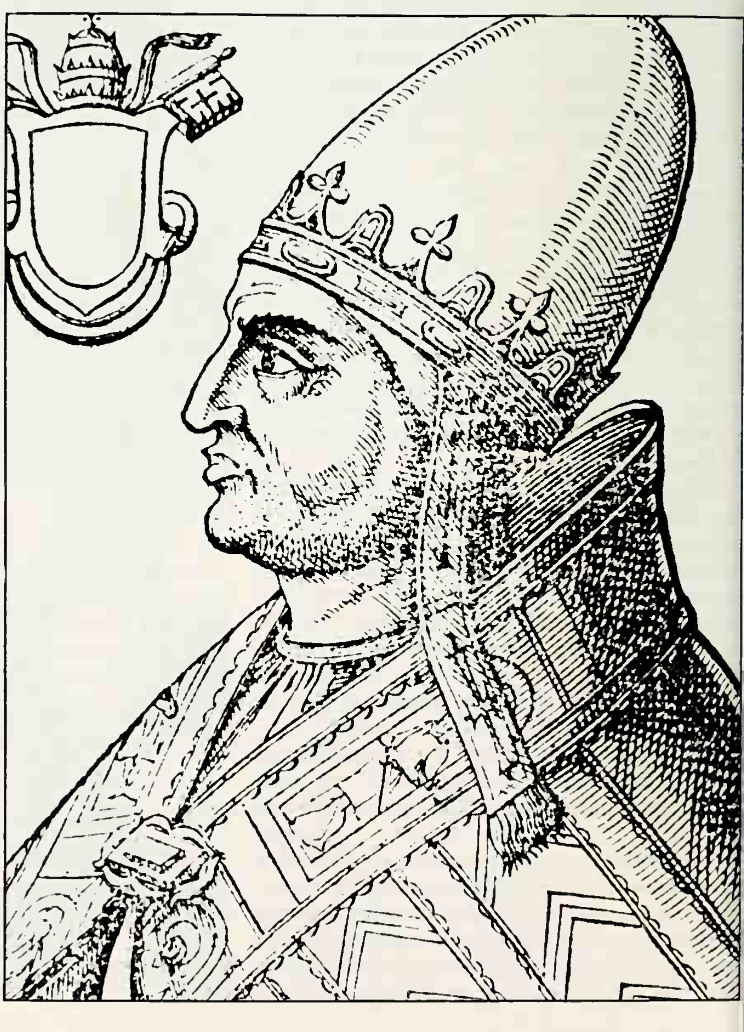
ROGER TILLEY

FURTHER READING: Ellen Scott Davidson, *Forerunners of St Francis* (Houghton, Miflin, 1927); Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition* (AMS Press reprint); A. Muston, *The Israel of the Alps*, 2 vols, (AMS Press, 1978, c1875).

Below left Pope Gregory IX (1227–41), the father of the Inquisition, initiated a decade of fierce attack against Waldensian settlements



Below right Pope Alexander III, who at first welcomed the Waldensian movement and approved their vows of poverty



Mansell Collection

WALSINGHAM

THE SMALL TOWN of Walsingham in Norfolk, England, was a famous place of pilgrimage in honour of the Virgin Mary all through the Middle Ages, and until the Reformation it rivalled Canterbury in popularity. During the 20th century Walsingham became once again a major place of Christian pilgrimage. The famous scholar Erasmus, who visited Walsingham in 1511, not many years before the shrine was destroyed, found it 'sustained by scarcely anything else but the number of its visitors.' The same is true again today, as devoted pilgrims crowd the narrow streets and buses maneouvre awkwardly in the country lanes.

The fame of Walsingham goes back to the Lady Richelde de Fervaques, widow of one of the Norman lords of the manor. She experienced a series of three dreams in which she was taken to Palestine by the Virgin, and shown the house in Nazareth in which Mary was told by the Archangel Gabriel that she was to be the mother of Jesus and in which Jesus spent his boyhood. The Virgin told Richelde to build a replica of the Holy House in Walsingham.

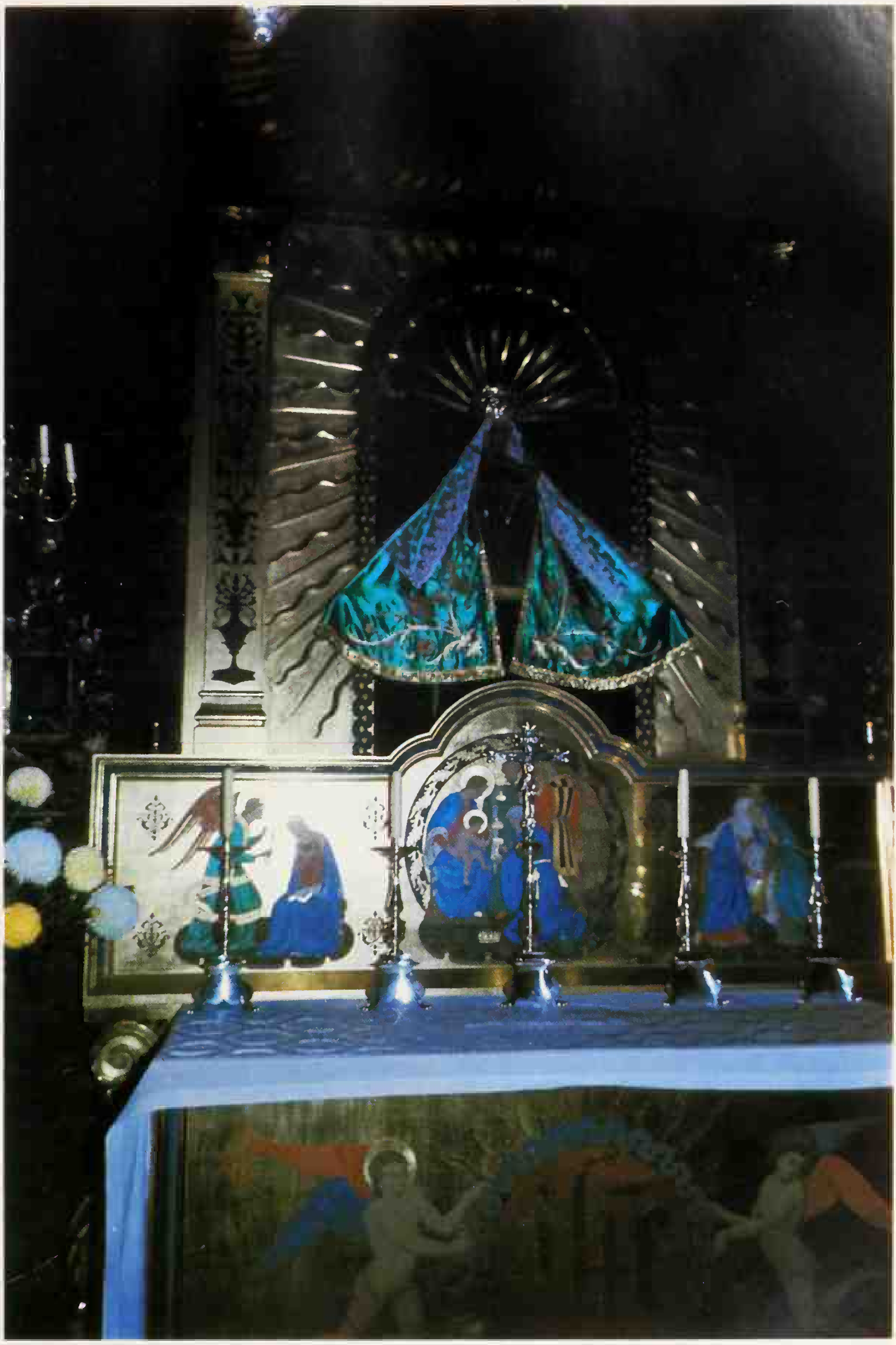
Richelde gladly obeyed, but everything went wrong with the work and she spent a night in prayer asking for the Virgin's guidance. In the morning she found the little wooden house finished and moved by supernatural means to a spot some 200 feet away. The traditional date for the founding of the shrine is 1061, but this comes from a late 15th-century ballad and it is thought more likely that it was built after 1100.

Walsingham was to have a later rival in Italy, where the Holy House of Loreto on the Adriatic attracted great numbers of pilgrims. This was claimed to be the Virgin's actual home from Nazareth, not a copy as at Walsingham. The Loreto legend was that the house was picked up and transported by angels 1500 miles through the sky to Italy.

Walsingham's Holy House was famous long before Loreto, and miracles of healing were reported. About 1153 an Augustinian priory was founded, whose canons cared for the shrine and the growing number of pilgrims. King Henry III visited Walsingham and was a noted benefactor, and a substantial church was completed in about 1280. It must have towered over the comparatively diminutive Holy House, whose dimensions were later recorded as 23ft 6in by 12ft 10in.

Almost every ruler of England, down to and including Henry VIII himself, made the pilgrimage to 'England's Nazareth'. In the 14th century a chapel was constructed a mile and a half away from the village. This was later called the Slipper Chapel and it was said that the most devout pilgrims used to take off their shoes there before walking the final distance to Walsingham in their bare feet. The priory church was also rebuilt at this time and the Franciscans opened a friary in Walsingham, despite protests by the Augustinians, who feared for their income from the pilgrims. Today both priory and friary are in ruins.

In 1538, when the shrine was closed down on the orders of Henry VIII, Walsingham Priory was the second richest religious house in Norfolk. The Holy House was demolished and the famous image of Our Lady of Walsingham, which generations of pilgrims had venerated ('She hath been the Devil's instrument to bring many, I fear, to eternal fire,' wrote Bishop Hugh Latimer censoriously), was carted ignominiously to London and burnt. The Augustinian canons were pensioned off and Walsingham retreated into obscurity for 350 years.


Spectrum Colour Library

Interior of the Anglican shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham: its fame rivalled that of Canterbury, until its destruction during the Reformation. The new shrine church was built in 1931

The two leading figures in the revival of Walsingham as a pilgrimage centre were a devout spinster named Charlotte Boyd (1838-1906) and a Church of England clergyman, Alfred Hope Patten (1885-1958). Miss Boyd visited Walsingham in the 1890s, and apparently intended to buy the Slipper Chapel, which had been converted into cottages, as a house for Church of England nuns. In 1894, however, she was received into the Roman Catholic Church, bought the chapel and had it restored as a centre of Roman Catholic devotion, in the care of the Benedictine monks of Downside Abbey. An annual Catholic pilgrimage to the Slipper Chapel developed and a new statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was placed there.

In 1934 10,000 of the faithful, led by a cardinal and numerous bishops, made the pilgrimage to the Slipper Chapel, which was now declared a national shrine, and the large-scale pilgrimage to Walsingham dates from that year. In 1968 the Marist Fathers took over the running of the shrine, developing with it a much larger building, the Chapel of Reconciliation, opened in 1981.

The Holy House Resurrected

The Rev. Alfred Hope Patten was appointed vicar of the Church of England parish of Walsingham in 1921. A man of High Church convictions and of vigorous and determined personality, he had been much impressed as a boy when he saw the replica of Lady Richelde's Holy House in the new church in the Sussex village of Buxted, built in 1887. He came to believe that he had a mission from God to revive a Marian shrine, and Walsingham gave him what seemed a heaven-sent opportunity.

Hope Patten soon revived the medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary and organised pilgrimages to Walsingham, which at first centred on the parish church of St Mary & All Saints. In 1931, a new Anglican shrine was opened – not on the site of the original Holy House, where permission was refused, but as close to it as possible, opposite one of the gates of the medieval priory – and was extended in 1937. Patten was its administrator and head of its college of guardians, as well as Vicar of Walsingham, until his death in 1958. Anglican nuns help with the work of the shrine today.

Hope Patten triumphed over many obstacles. He always maintained that when he was first appointed to Walsingham the parish church was full of evil spirits, but he managed to drive the demons back by sprinkling them with holy water. As well as the forces of Satan, he had also to contend with the villagers, who were at first not much in favour of his Marian devotions and High Church ways, and the intense disapproval of the Bishop of Norwich, Bertram Pollock. When the shrine was opened in 1931, Hope Patten had an inscription put on the foundation stone, recording that it had been built in the pontificate of Pope Pius XI and the episcopate of Bertram of Norwich. Bishop Pollock insisted that his name be removed and, on seeing the shrine, said: 'It is far worse than I expected...All these things which you have put in must be cleared away.'

The things were not cleared away. Far from it: the shrine is an extreme expression of the spirituality of the Oxford Movement and the 19th-century Catholic revival in the Church of England. A flamboyant construction in brick and flint, it has a Byzantine air and is richly bedecked with effigies, candles, murals, stained glass and gilding. There are numerous masses and processions. At the heart of it is the tiny, dark Holy House with its image of the Virgin and Child above the altar, the Virgin crowned and holding a sceptre in the form of a golden lily.

The statue is a copy of the image of Our Lady of Walsingham on the medieval priory seal. It is carried in procession around the shrine gardens while the pilgrims hold lighted candles and sing the pilgrim hymn, which tells the story of the shrine. Pilgrims also receive water from the spring on the site, near the entrance and the memorial to Hope Patten.

Surrounding the innermost shrine are 15 chapels, one for each of the mysteries of the Rosary. Some are dedicated to British saints; one chapel has a relic of the True Cross. In the grounds are the 15 Stations of the Cross. The principal national Anglican pilgrimage to Walsingham is held in the spring every year and culminates in a procession which circles the village. It attracts some 10,000 people, as well as protesting Christian fundamentalists in recent years, objecting to what they regard as the 'popish' nature of the proceedings.

Hope Patten felt a certain rivalry with the Roman Catholics – or, as he liked to call them, 'our fellow Catholics who are not in communion with Canterbury' – but the ecumenical movement has brought the Christian denominations closer together. The Methodist Chapel in Walsingham was converted into a Russian Orthodox church in 1988 and Anglicans and Roman Catholics increasingly join in each other's observances. The movement to ordain women priests in the Church of England was not well received at Walsingham, which announced that they would not be permitted to officiate at the shrine, and in 1994 the Vicar of Walsingham let it be known that he was leaving the Church of England for the Roman Catholic Church.

WALWORTH JUMPERS

THE SECT of Walworth Jumpers, also known as the Girlingites, Bible Christians, Children of God, or English Shakers, first met in Suffolk and later in London. Around 1870 they were holding religious services of an unorthodox order under a railway arch in Sutherland Street, Walworth Road, South London. Here large crowds of poor people assembled to listen to the preaching of the founder and leader of the sect, a tall, thin, Suffolk woman with high cheekbones and dark piercing eyes, whose name was Mary Anne Girling.

The main belief of the sect was that if its members stayed celibate they would never die. From the date of their full conversion, they considered themselves immortal. A characteristic feature of the Girlingite services was the dancing and jumping of the believers, who often fell down on the floor in fits, made trance utterings, and screamed in religious fervour.

From the noisy railway arch Mrs Girling moved with her loyal followers to a small chapel in College Place, Chelsea. Among the new disciples was a wealthy woman named Mrs Julia Wood, who was persuaded to buy a large house in Battersea in South London as a home for the sect. Here Mrs Girling had a vision, that 'God had given her New Forest Lodge, at Hordle in Hampshire,' as a country headquarters. She said she had no idea where it was, but God would direct her to it. Sure enough, the house and estate were soon revealed, and the faithful Mrs Wood went to her bank and bought the property for Mrs Girling.

All the Children of God, with their spiritual Mother leading them, now moved to the New Forest, where they were joined by several farmers and labourers; and by 1874 there were 164 members living in the house, which was surrounded by grounds which could not adequately support them. Everyone led a communal life, handing over all they possessed when they entered the colony, but as Mrs Girling forbade working for profit, or trading with the outside world, her followers were soon in debt, dispossessed of the house and forced to live in tents in a field in the nearby hamlet of Tiptoe.

A correspondent of *The Times*, visiting Mrs Girling in February 1875, reported how after a few sentences of prayer she began leaping rhythmically from foot to foot, waving her arms with a beckoning motion, while repeating short sentences of religious exhortation. A young woman on a front seat joined in, starting a strange dance with springy, elastic movements and considerable waving of her arms. Three-quarters of the disciples at this time were women. There was also a blacksmith, a shoemaker and a tailor. But most were farm labourers, and all were at that time unemployed.

Mrs Girling rejected the title given to her followers of 'English Shakers', preferring to call them Bible Christians. She pointed out that the American Shakers believed in Christ only as a prophet, whereas her followers believed in Christ as God-Man. But celibacy and the communal sharing of goods were common to both sects (see SHAKERS).

Men and women leaving the colony had spread rumours in the district that the dancers took off their clothes, but Mrs Girling denied this was ever done under direction, although it sometimes happened when the worshippers became over-excited.

Cold weather, the hostility and curiosity of neighbours, and lack of money, contributed to the collapse of the colony. Several members died of tuberculosis. In about 1878, Mrs Girling announced that she was greater than the Holy Ghost, and henceforth was to be known as the God-Mother, the Bride of Christ. To prove her claim, she displayed the nail marks of the Crucifixion on her feet and hands. A few months later she announced that she was the reincarnation of Jesus, saying, 'It was prophesied that false Christs should come and all others are false, for besides me there is none other.'

In 1885 Mrs Girling was taken ill and confined to bed. Malignant cancer was diagnosed and, after suffering excruciating pain, she arose from her sick bed to declare that she would never die. Her followers believed her, and she lingered on, the colony being sadly reduced to a few ardent disciples. Finally, on 18 September 1886, she died, and was buried next to those of her sect who had preceded her, in Hordle churchyard, near Lymington in Hampshire, where the curious may still see the graves of the Mother and some of her disciples.

JOHN MONTGOMERY

The royal sceptre, the Lord Chancellor's staff, the sergeant major's swagger stick and the conductor's baton are all derived from the magic wands of kings and priests

WAND

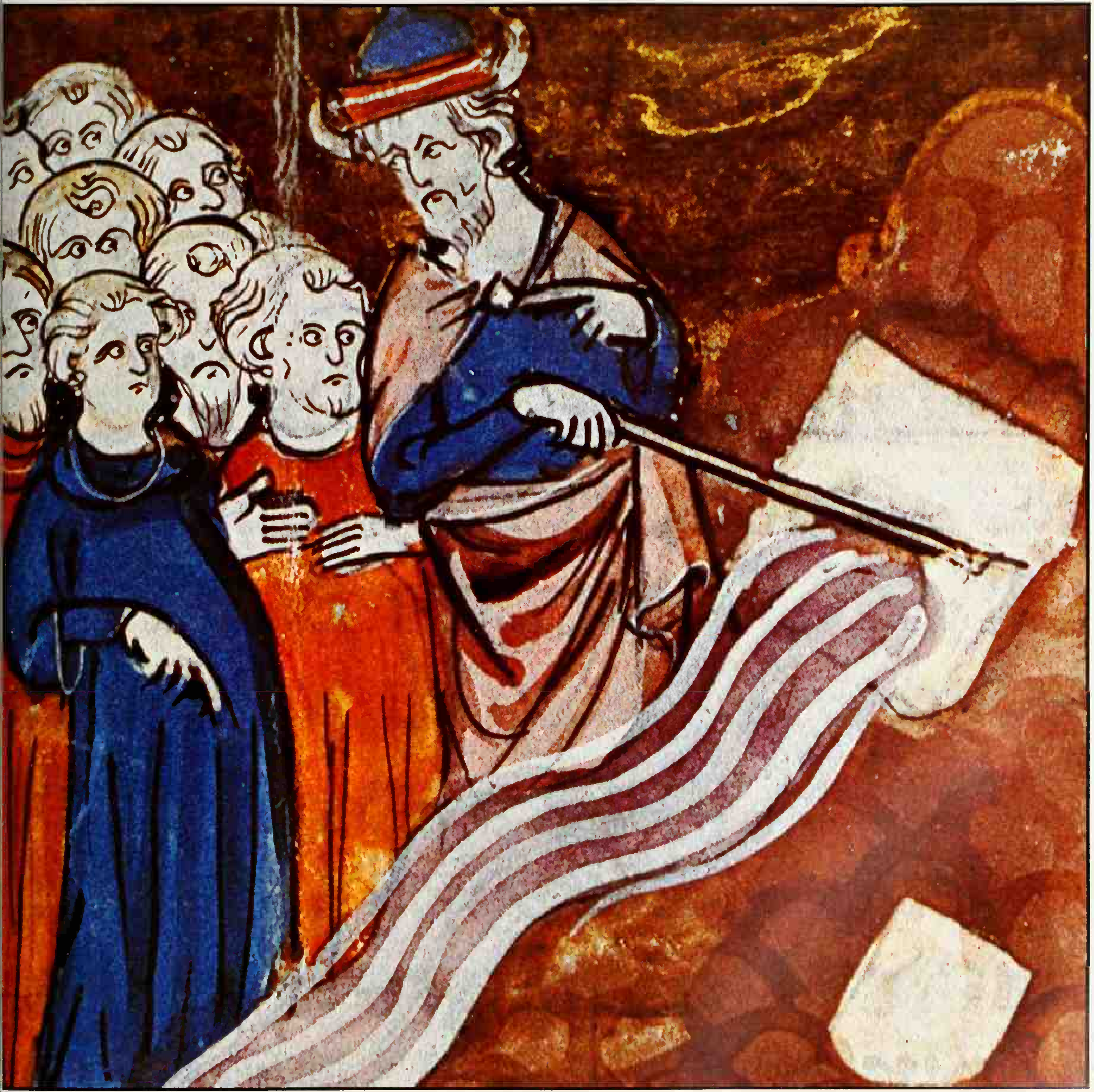
AS SYMBOLS of authority, the wand and the rod can be traced back to the staffs of the priest kings and magician healers of antiquity. The sceptre is an old symbol of kingship. A herald, the inviolable emissary of a king, carried a staff of office and the caduceus of the Greek god Hermes (see HERMES) was his herald's wand. The shepherd's crook was an emblem of royal authority in Egypt. Medieval physicians inherited the custom of carrying wands from their priestly predecessors. Red Indian chieftains bore carved wands as their badges of office.

In its simplest form, as a stick or staff, the wand must have been one of man's earliest weapons, enabling him to subjugate wild animals and human enemies alike. It has also long been recognized as a phallic symbol. It is a sign of power and virility, supernatural and physical (and consequently, clerical or secular) in a wide variety of forms.

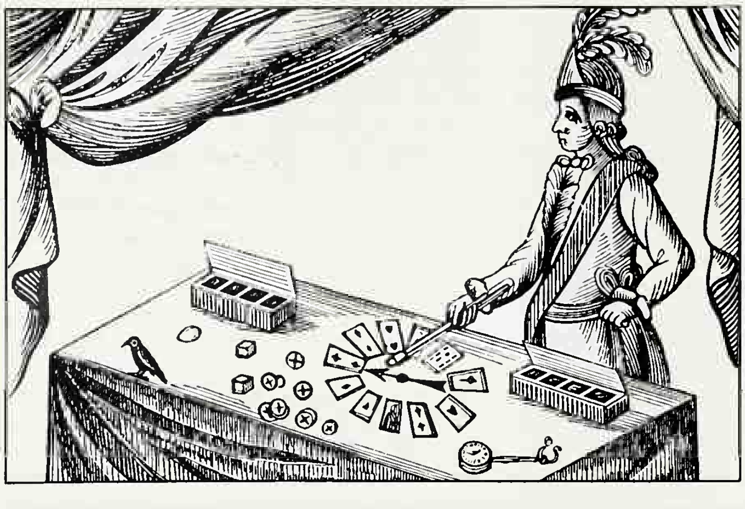
In its supernatural context, the wand is an agent of transformation, a well-known example being the fairy wand, which is supposed to draw its power from the sun, represented by the star at its tip. The wand is also a means of aiming power at a given object; like the pointing finger or the pointing bone, it was once regarded as the agency of intense psychic power.

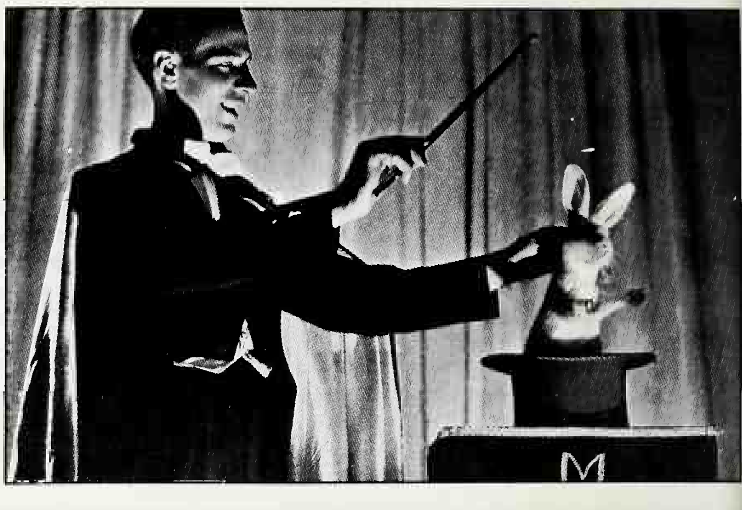
The construction of a wand was carried out in great secrecy and accompanied by mystical ceremonies. The wand of the wizard was usually of hazel-wood (see HAZEL) cut from the tree at sunrise, in order to draw upon the untouched solar energy; the knife used in the operation would be baptized in blood. At the same time special prayers were addressed to the high gods imploring

The rods of Moses and Aaron are the most famous examples of magic wands: Moses striking water from a rock as the Israelites cross the wilderness: 14th century French Bible



Bodleian Library Colour Filmstrip





Mander & Mitchenson Collection

Above **The conjuror's wand is a descendant of the wand of power of the magician *Below* Leader of a British witch coven dressed to represent the jackal-headed Egyptian god Anubis: in one hand he holds a wand topped by an ankh, the symbol of life, and in the other a sistrum or ceremonial rattle: the magic wand probably goes back to the early use of sticks and staffs as natural weapons against human and animal enemies**

their help in endowing the wand with power and authority. The wands of the English and Welsh Druids were usually constructed of yew, and those of the Irish Druids of yew, hawthorn or rowan, all of these being sacred trees. The medieval magician would often fix a magnetized steel cap to the end and tip of his wand with the object of projecting an extremely powerful magnetic force. He would use it sparingly, reserving it for important acts of magic and concealing it from view within his voluminous sleeve.

In ancient grimoires and annals of sorcery there are many curious references to the employment of special types of wands for the various magical rites. Those who sought to communicate with Satan used wands of cypress wood – the cypress being well-known as a tree of death – and with this inscribed a magical circle at a cross-roads at midnight. When attempting to communicate with the spirit of a suicide, the magician would touch the corpse nine times and then order it to answer his questions, under threat of torment. The use of a sword, in place of a wand, occurs in the records of English witchcraft past and present.

References to a special type of wand used by witches can be found in an anonymous 15th century work, *Errores Gazariorum*, which states that the witch received a special stick at the time of her initiation. In the early 17th century, the demonologist Henri Boguet declared that witches travelled through the air on white staffs, and this statement confirms that of Lambert Daneau, who had said in his work *Les Sorciers* (1564) that the witch received from the Devil a staff or rod which she used for flying (see also BROOMSTICK; FLYING OINTMENT). Modern witches use wands and staffs for purposes of divination; their riding staff is in fact a phallic emblem.

Wands were used by sorcerers for the detection of hidden treasures and other valuables. This is referred to in one of Sheppard's epigrams, dated 1651:

> Some sorcerers do boast they have a rod
> Gathered with Vowes and Sacrifice
> And (borne about) will strangely nod
> To hidden treasure where it lies.

The wand of divination has close affinities with the forked hazel twig of the ancient miners and water diviners (see DOWSING) which, like the wand, had to be cut at either sunrise or sunset, with the sun's rays shining through the forks of the twig at the time.

There are references in some old works to the use of the wand in tests of chastity. In a tale in the *Mabinogion* (see MABINOGION), the wand of the wizard Math is used to determine whether or not the Lady Arianrhod has remained a virgin. Probably the old belief that walking over a magic wand served as a test of virginity was the origin of a Welsh wedding custom, in which the couple solemnized their union by stepping over a broomstick. Wands were also employed for the detection of thieves and murderers.

Rural wise men were often credited with the power to capture hares and other small game by waving or pointing their walking sticks in their direction; a practice which continued until the middle of the 19th century. On some farms men known as 'goose-charmers' were called in to bless the flocks, and would reinforce their incantations by waving a short stick.

John Moss

As the instrument of transformation, the wand occurs in the Celtic legend of Diarmaid and Grainne, in which the sorcerer transforms his own son into 'a cropped pig having neither ears nor tail'. In another Celtic legend a fairy woman strikes her rival with a wand and she becomes a beautiful wolfhound. In the *Odyssey*, the enchantress Circe strikes Odysseus's men with her wand, turning them into swine (see CIRCE).

To the physician priests of antiquity, the wand conferred not only the divine authority of the healer, but also the power to detect diseases. Medieval physicians were immediately recognizable by the wands which they bore. It was the custom for physicians to carry a walking stick down into the 18th century; the last of the line of 'wand carriers' being apparently the famous London physician, Dr John Radcliffe, whose gold-headed cane is preserved by the Royal College of Physicians. Charm-wands were still in use by rustic healers for the treatment of ague in the East Anglia marshlands up to about 150 years ago.

Aaron's Rod

Perhaps the most famous examples of wands used for supernatural purposes were the rods of Moses and Aaron, which were employed to divide the waters of the Red Sea, to cause water to gush forth from a rock in the desert, and to confound the enchantment of Pharaoh's magicians. According to an old Mohammedan legend, after the wand had been transformed into a serpent before Pharoah (Exodus, chapter 7) it suddenly grasped his throne and, suspending it in the air for a moment, announced: 'If it please Allah, I could swallow up not only the throne with thee and all that are here present but even thy palace and all that it contains without anyone seeing the slightest change in me.'

In a curious Jewish legend, Aaron's rod is described as having been created on the sixth day of Creation, and then taken by Adam out of Eden, and subsequently handed down through a succession of patriarchs. An early

Christian tradition relates how this miraculous rod had originally been cut from the Tree of Knowledge in Eden. It finally came into the hands of Judas, and provided the beam of the cross upon which Christ was crucified. In one of the earliest portraits of Christ, incidentally, discovered in a catacomb in the 3rd century, the Saviour is depicted with a wand in his hands.

In the form of the sceptre, the wand is the emblem of temporal power. In Britain, the royal sceptre which is placed in the monarch's right hand at his coronation endows him with his kingly authority, while his other sceptres symbolize mercy and justice. The Ivory Rod, which is over three feet long, is another royal wand of office which expresses the supernatural authority vested in an anointed king. It has been suggested that the monarch's sceptre is derived from the sacred spear upon which the war chief leaned when delivering judgement; yet another example of the magic wand.

The great officers of state are presented with special wands at the time of their appointment, to endow them with part of the royal authority. The white staff carried by the Lord Chancellor signifies not only that he acts on the monarch's behalf but that his duties will be carried out with uprightness and purity. At one time the Earl Marshal would be presented with a wooden staff, but from the reign of Richard II onwards the holder of this office has been entitled to a gold staff bearing both the king's arms and his own as the symbol of his authority. The swagger stick carried by army officers provides yet a further example of the wand of power, and similarly, the baton of the conductor of an orchestra.

The modern conjuror's wand is traceable to the magician's wand of medieval days, if not to the staffs carried by court jesters. In the past, the conjuror was regarded as identical with the sorcerer, the two terms being interchangeable. As members of the Magic Circle are well aware, a magician without his wand is as ineffective as a soldier without his gun. Any appearance on stage without this ancient symbol of psychic powers dissipates both the magician's authority as a worker of wonders and his power of command over his audience.

ERIC MAPLE

Thorns in the flesh of the major Christian Churches, these eccentric and sometimes disreputable ecclesiastics can nevertheless claim apostolic succession and a valid, if irregular, consecration

WANDERING BISHOPS

IN THE LATE 1950s, the staider inhabitants of Brittany began to be both scandalized and alarmed by the unusual ecclesiastical activities of His Whiteness the Humble (Sa Blancheur L'Humble) Tugdual I, Archbishop of Dol, Primate of the Holy Celtic Church in Brittany, Abbot of St Dolay, Kayermo, and Keroussek. It was not so much the Archbishop's custom of administering the sacrament of baptism on the seashore at midnight that gave offence – although in such a traditionally Catholic area as rural Brittany it was naturally the cause of some surprise – but the fact that, save for his headgear (an imposing mitre of vaguely Gothic Revival pattern), it was alleged that he wore nothing at all while conducting this simple, but no doubt reverent, ceremony. Even the Archbishop's worst enemies, however, were forced to agree that, whatever his dress, he never failed to carry his crozier while performing his archiepiscopal duties.

Like most of the smaller Churches of Christendom, the Holy Celtic Church founded by Archbishop Tugdual suffers from 'too many Chiefs and not enough Indians'. Indeed, in the year 1970 it had no less than 14 bishops to administer to the spiritual needs of its nine lay members and to achieve its aim of reviving the Celtic invocation of 'Hum-Hum-Hum' (mysteriously spelt Oiv-Oiv-Oiv). Odd as this Church undoubtedly is, the oddest thing about it is that its bishops have the authentic apostolic succession (see PRIESTS) and that they have been validly, although highly irregularly, consecrated. For these unusual ecclesiastics are some of the *episcopi vagantes*, wandering bishops, whose existence and increasing numbers have been a cause of annoyance to the Orthodox, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches since the beginning of this century.

One authority has estimated that there are something like 800 of these wandering bishops, most of them still active, though some have retired into private life. Some of them teach a syncretistic neo-gnosticism and practise faith healing, occultism and magic; others preach the historic creeds of Christianity, although these are divided on certain points of doctrine. Some are unquestionably rogues, and one or two of them have suffered long terms of imprisonment. Others live lives of great holiness – the present writer has met at least one who could be described as a saintly eccentric. Most of them are in schism from one another, but divided as they are, almost all of them have three things in common: a disregard of, and contempt for, the ecclesiastical disciplines of Rome, Constantinople and Canterbury; an almost magical belief in the importance of a valid apostolic succession; and an episcopal status ultimately derived from the Dutch Old Catholic (Jansenist) Church through either the Polish Mariavite Church or one or other of the successors of Archbishop Mathew, an eccentric Englishman who died in 1919.

Live Tiger in the Pulpit

Archbishop Mathew was a most erratic and unstable character. Born in 1852, of a Roman Catholic father and an Anglican mother, he underwent baptism in both Churches. Perhaps this early influence was the cause of the religious indecision that made him first an Anglican theological student, then a Roman priest – at this period his lifelong love of animals was responsible for his terrorizing the faithful of St Mary's, Bath, by introducing a live tiger into his pulpit – then a Unitarian, then a curate of the Church of England, then a Catholic layman, and finally an Old Catholic Archbishop. Even this last period was marked by one submission to Rome, one recantation of this submission, and a brief spiritual flirtation with Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society.

Mathew was consecrated a Bishop on 28 April 1908 by Archbishop Gul of Utrecht. On historical grounds the validity of his consecration seems unquestionable, for although the Dutch Old Catholic Church had been in schism from Rome since 1739 its episcopal line of succession could be traced back in an unbroken line to Cardinal Antonio Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII. Nevertheless, the consecration was clearly obtained by fraud, for while both the Old Catholic bishops, and Mathew himself, were sincerely convinced that the latter represented a large and growing body of English Catholics who desired independence from Rome, the reality was very different. For Mathew was no more than the innocent tool of a tiny body of disgruntled, excommunicated, and possibly financially dishonest Catholic priests.

These were led by two Monsignori, Herbert Beale and Arthur Howarth, who had at one time been in charge of parishes in the diocese of Nottingham. Both had been on good terms with Bishop Bagshawe, who had been Bishop of Nottingham until his forcible retirement in 1901. Bagshawe has been described as saintly, in spite of occasional flashes of bad temper – on one occasion he excommunicated the entire membership of that High Tory body, the Primrose League – and he was usually prepared to turn a blind eye on the behaviour of his clergy, however outrageous, and to appoint to responsible positions priests who had been sacked from other dioceses. So great was Bagshawe's tolerance that his diocese became known as *refugium peccatorum*, the refuge of sinners. Bishop Brindle, Bagshawe's successor, was a man of quite a different type and engaged in a general clean-up – he sacked Beale and Howarth for various alleged financial irregularities. These two seem to have had no other motive for getting Mathew to establish an English branch of the Old Catholic Church than a desire to annoy their lawful ecclesiastical superiors, Bishop Brindle and Cardinal Bourne.

On his return from Holland, poor Mathew soon realized that he had been the victim of fraud, that the 'seventeen priests' and 'eight parishes' who had supposedly chosen him to be consecrated as their bishop existed solely in the imaginations of Beale and Howarth. For the rest of his life he devoted his efforts to holding together his tiny personal following, usually numbering no more than three or four, consoling himself for his lonely life by writing lengthy essays designed to prove the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare, and dreaming of a National Catholic Church under his own leadership. Unfortunately Mathew attempted to put

Faber & Faber

Faber & Faber

The wandering bishops have 'an almost magical belief in the importance of a valid apostolic succession' *Left* His Whiteness the Humble Tugdual I, Archbishop of Dol, Primate of the Holy Celtic Church in Brittany, Abbot of St Dolay, Kayermo, and Keroussek: a fondness for resounding titles is characteristic of the wandering bishops, who have been a cause of annoyance to the more orthodox Churches all this century *Right* Joseph Rene Villate derived his episcopal status ultimately from the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, and bishops of the African Orthodox Churches in turn derive their succession from him

his dreams into practice and consecrated a number of bishops; he was a poor judge of character and many of those he consecrated were clearly quite unsuitable candidates for any ecclesiastical position.

Mathew performed comparatively few consecrations but there were some bishops who were prepared to confer the episcopate on anyone who could pay a sufficiently large fee. It is through such fee-snatching activities that the lines of succession of many of the wandering bishops of the present day are derived.

The Archbishop of Utrecht, 18 months after his consecration of Mathew, obligingly supplied the Polish Mariavites with their first bishop, a certain Michael Kowalski. The Mariavite Church had approximately 20,000 members and had come into existence as a result of the mystical experiences of a woman named Maria Kozlowska. Maria, who had started her adult life as a poverty-stricken sewing-woman, had founded, in 1887, a community of Franciscan Tertiaries (lay members of a monastic order), all female. The Virgin, said Maria, had instructed her to found a mixed religious community dedicated to the life of Mary. This organization, the Mariavite (Life of Mary) Union, was duly established and met with considerable success, for it appealed strongly to the messianic elements in Polish Catholicism. Maria began to be known as 'Little Mother', was venerated as a living saint, and continued to have further revelations.

By 1904 the Polish hierarchy had become alarmed by the growing strength of the Mariavite Union and by rumours of immoral activities in its mixed monasteries. An investigation was undertaken and a report sent to Rome. The Holy See, always suspicious of saints, declared that Maria's revelations were spurious, that her visions were hallucinations, and ordered the dissolution of the Mariavite Union and its communities. The Mariavites disregarded the Pope's ruling and were excommunicated.

Marriage in a Monastery

With Kowalski as its presiding Archbishop the Mariavite Church became ever more eccentric. Monks and nuns entered into 'spiritual marriages' – and sometimes carnal relations – with one another, women were ordained, and idolization of the Virgin Mary was encouraged. By 1930 Kowalski had actually consecrated his spiritual directress, a nun named Sister Isabella, as a female bishop and concluded that both he and she were infallible and impeccable.

Kowalski seems to have enjoyed nothing more than manufacturing bishops and carried out many consecrations; Sister Isabella was just as keen to make female bishops, and in just two months she consecrated 11 of them. In their turn Kowalski's bishops made more bishops, and today most of the episcopi vagantes who are not in the Mathew succession derive their status from the Mariavite line – although, of course, many have both lines of succession, for the conditional reconsecration of one another is a favourite recreation of the wandering bishops.

Two other lines of episcopal succession were created as a result of the activities of Joseph Rene Villate (d. 1929) and Julius Ferrete (d. 1904). Both these prelates ultimately derived their episcopal status from Peter the Humble, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. There is some doubt as to the validity of the consecrations of both Villate and Ferrete, but because of cross-consecrations almost all the wandering bishops can claim an undoubted line of descent from Mathew or the Mariavites.

Aleister Crowley – Bishop

Many of the wandering bishops have chosen to involve themselves in faith healing, magic and occultism. On the other hand, quite a few magicians have sought the episcopate for their own purposes. Thus Julius Hussay, who became a bishop of the Villate line in 1904, seems to have acquired his episcopal status only because he believed that it would greatly enhance his magical powers. Hussay, who wrote several extremely boring books on magic, conditionally consecrated a number of bishops of the Gnostic Catholic Church, a mysterious body which still survives in several offshoots, each claiming the only orthodoxy. The consecrations were conditional because these French Gnostic bishops had already had the episcopate conferred upon them by A. Doinel, who himself claimed to have been 'twice spiritually consecrated a Bishop'; on the first occasion by Jesus Christ who had, so Doinel said, made one of his rare personal appearances, and on the second by the ghosts of two medieval Cathar bishops who had chosen to manifest themselves at a Spiritualist seance. Hussay also consecrated an ex-Trappist monk named Giraud, and he in turn, consecrated as a Gnostic bishop Joanny Bricaud, a prolific writer on magic.

At about the same time Dr Encausse, who wrote on occultism under the name of Papus (see PAPUS) and was a Gnostic bishop, had various masonic dignities conferred upon him by Theodor Reuss, as head of the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, an organization specializing in sexual magic (see CROWLEY). Dr Encausse returned the compliment by consecrating Reuss, an action which seems to have led to Aleister Crowley becoming a bishop! For when Crowley visited Reuss in Berlin and had conferred upon himself the chieftainship of the British section of the O.T.O., he was also consecrated as a Gnostic Catholic bishop – or so Reuss claimed. Crowley, however, does not appear to have been aware of his new status; certainly he never made any attempt to exercise his ecclesiastical functions, although, it is true, he did write a special Mass for the Gnostic Church.

Of all the hundreds of independent Churches spanned by the wandering Bishops, only two groups have shown any real capacity for survival and growth. The first of these groups is that of the African Orthodox Churches which, in spite of numerous schisms, have made considerable inroads amongst the membership of those African Churches which are still, to some extent, under the control of the ecclesiastical hierarchies of the former colonial powers. The second group consists of those Churches deriving from the Theosophical followers of Archbishop Mathew.

The African Orthodox Churches derive their episcopal succession from Villate who, in 1921, consecrated George Alexander McGuire, a former Episcopalian missionary in the West Indies, as 'Patriarch Alexander of the African Orthodox Church of the World'. Within a short time this new Church achieved a sizeable membership among the Negro population of the United States, almost certainly because of its appeal to black nationalism; it is significant that *The Negro Churchman*, the newspaper of the new Church, described McGuire's consecration as being 'the germ of a Racial Church'.

Throughout the years of the Depression the Church continued to grow, but after McGuire's death in 1935 various schisms occurred and there was a consequent decline in membership. At the present time, however, there are at least four Churches active in the United States and the West Indies deriving from the McGuire organization.

Saviour of African Christianity

It is in Africa itself that the African Orthodox Church has met with its greatest successes and has in certain areas become a powerful rival to the missionary-led Churches in general and to the Anglican Church in particular.

McGuire extended his influence to Africa in 1928, when Daniel William Alexander, the son of an American father and a coloured South African mother, returned to South Africa after his consecration by McGuire in the previous year. Alexander established his cathedral in Kimberley and, significantly, dedicated it to an African saint, Augustine of Hippo. He soon made converts and within a few years had a considerable following in Kenya, in Uganda and in South Africa. Bishop Alexander was a man of intellectual ability, charm, and even holiness, being held in high regard by Anglicans.

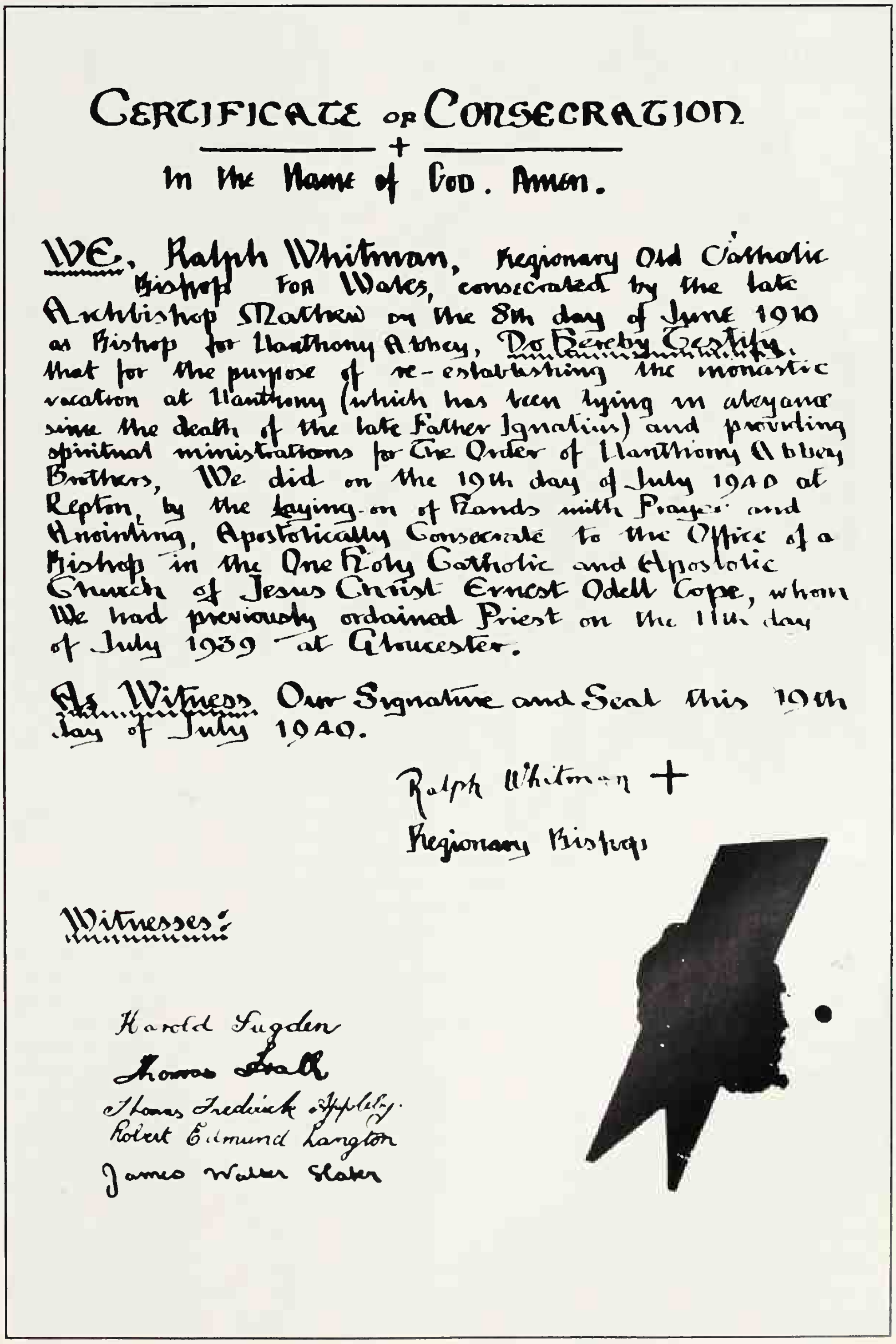
In Buganda – now part of the Republic of Uganda – a schismatic section of the African Orthodox Church has actually been brought into full communion with one of the ancient Patriarchates of Eastern Christendom. This, the African Greek Orthodox Church, came into existence as a result of the activities of a certain Reuben Spartas, a young African Christian who had rebelled against the theology of Anglican evangelicism.

The internal theological disputes of the world-wide Anglican communion have been reflected in the missionary activities of the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. Thus, in Africa, the Universities' Mission to Central Africa has occupied the extreme Anglo-Catholic position, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel has been in the middle of the road, and the Church Missionary Society has represented the evangelical viewpoint.

Reuben Spartas had been brought up by the Christian Missionary Society as an evangelical and had become the cook of a missionary archdeacon. He soon rebelled against both Low Church theology and the white colonialism which he believed it represented, writing to Cosmo Gordon Lang, then Archbishop of Canterbury, to tell him that the Church of England had 'no Catholic faith, Doctrine and Real Principles' and to McGuire that he had resolved 'to go to hell, gaol, or die for the redemption of Africa'.

Spartas was consecrated by Alexander in 1932 and rapidly gained converts, establishing schools and churches throughout Buganda. In 1934 he broke away from Alexander, and his African Greek Orthodox Church was finally admitted into full communion with the Patriarchate of Alexandria

Certificate of the consecration of Ernest Odell Cope by Ralph Whitman, Regionary Old Catholic Bishop of Wales, who himself had been consecrated by Archbishop Mathew, an eccentric Englishman from whom many wandering bishops are 'apostolically' descended



CERTIFICATE OF CONSECRATION

+

In the Name of God. Amen.

WE, Ralph Whitman, Regionary Old Catholic Bishop for Wales, consecrated by the late Archbishop Mathew on the 8th day of June 1910 as Bishop for Llanthony Abbey, Do Hereby Testify that for the purpose of re-establishing the monastic vacation at Llanthony (which has been lying in abeyance since the death of the late Father Ignatius) and providing spiritual ministrations for The Order of Llanthony Abbey Brothers, We did on the 19th day of July 1940 at Repton, by the laying-on of Hands with Prayer and Anointing, Apostolically Consecrate to the Office of a Bishop in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ Ernest Odell Cope, whom We had previously ordained Priest on the 11th day of July 1939 at Gloucester.

As Witness Our Signature and Seal this 19th day of July 1940.

Ralph Whitman +
Regionary Bishop

Witnesses:

Harold Sugden
Thomas Hall
Thomas Frederick Appleby
Robert Edmund Langton
James Walter Slater

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

in 1946; today there is not only a Metropolitan for East Africa, appointed by the Patriarch of Alexandria, but the African Greek Orthodox Church uses the full liturgy of St John Chrysostom, translated into Luganda by Spartas himself.

It seems at least possible that such independent African Churches as that of Spartas offer the best hope for the survival of Christianity in Black Africa. More and more those Churches which, rightly or wrongly, are associated with the former colonial powers are falling into disfavour with newly-independent governments. It is an odd thought that the activities of such an ecclesiastical clown as Villate may ultimately prove to have been the salvation of African Christianity.

Liberal Catholicism

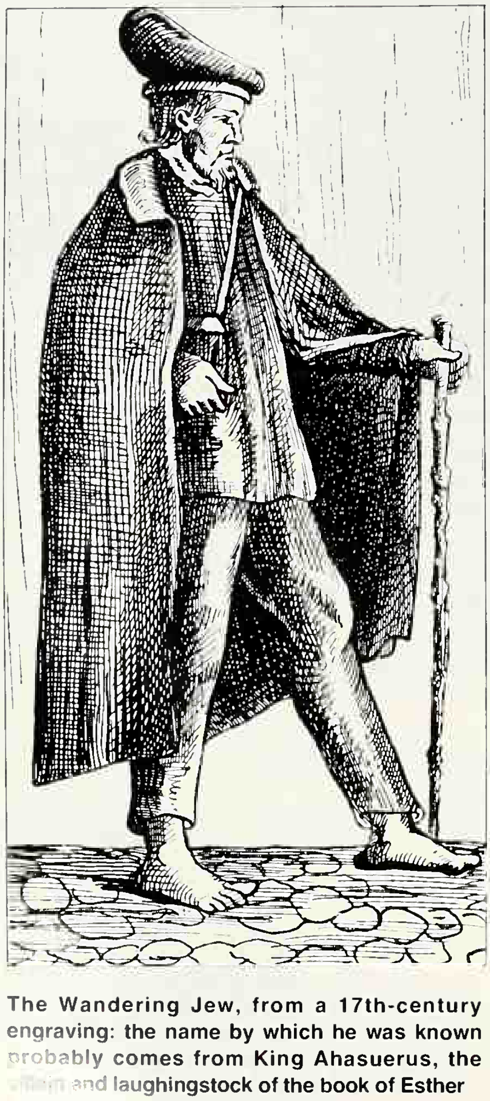
The theosophically-inclined Liberal Catholic Church came into existence when most of Archbishop Mathew's clerical and lay followers went into schism as a result of Mathew declaring that membership of the Theosophical Society was incompatible with membership of his own organization. The schismatics chose James Wedgwood, a member of the famous pottery family, as their leader and he was duly consecrated. The leadership of the Liberal Catholic Church, in practice if not in theory, passed to C. W. Leadbeater, a former Anglican curate and theosophist, who held this position until his death in the 1930s. He developed a strange neo-gnostic interpretation of Catholic Christianity and wrote *The Science of the Sacraments*, putting forward his ideas. The growth of Liberal Catholicism has not been spectacular but has nevertheless continued at a steady rate: today there are around 50,000 members of the Church.

The Churches founded by the wandering bishops are peculiar in every sense of the word. It is unlikely that we shall hear the last of them for many years to come.

FRANCIS KING

FURTHER READING: Peter Anson, *Bishops at Large* (Faber, 1964); H. R. T. Brandreth, *Episcopi Vagantes and the Anglican Communion* (S.P.C.K., 1947); C. W. Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments* (Theosophical Publishing House, 1929).

WANDERING JEW



The Wandering Jew, from a 17th-century engraving: the name by which he was known probably comes from King Ahasuerus, the villain and laughingstock of the book of Esther

AHASUERUS, the unwilling immortal, has been a well-known figure of European legend since 1602, when he was introduced to the public in a German pamphlet which declared that the late Lutheran Bishop of Schleswig had once met a Jew in Hamburg and learnt that he was more than 15 centuries old. This man had been a cobbler in Jerusalem in the time of Christ. When Jesus, carrying the cross, tried to rest on his doorstep, the Jew pushed him away saying, 'Go where you belong.' Jesus looked at him sternly and replied, 'I will stand here and rest, but you shall go on till I return.' Ever since – the bishop gathered – Ahasuerus had been wandering from country to country awaiting the Second Coming.

The pamphlet of 1602 appeared anonymously. A later edition gives the author as Chrysostomus Dudulaeus of Westphalia, otherwise unknown. The legend became popular at once: besides many German editions of the pamphlet, there were soon eight in Dutch and Flemish, others in French, Danish and Swedish, and an English parody.

The Immortal

Ahasuerus's title varies. In German-speaking countries, he is the 'immortal' or 'eternal' Jew. The epithet 'wandering' has its source in the French version, which made him *le juif errant*. With other nationalities he has acquired different names: in Spain he is Juan Espera-en-Dios ('trust in God') and in Belgium, Isaac Laquedem.

About 20 reports of the Wandering Jew are on record. Besides his Hamburg appearance in 1542 or 1547, he is said to have been seen in Spain in 1575, Vienna in 1599, Ypres in 1623, Brussels in 1640 and Paris in 1644. Later appearances are rarer, although they include one in Newcastle in 1790, and one in Salt Lake City in 1868, when the wanderer met a Mormon named O'Grady – an event duly reported in the *Deseret News*.

While Ahasuerus cannot be documented before 1602, he has older antecedents. The notion goes back to a saying of Jesus: 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom' (Matthew 16.28).

Early Christians speculated that somebody would be kept alive by divine favour until Christ did return. Such hopes centred for a while on John, the beloved disciple, to whom Jesus had made a rather similar cryptic remark about 'remaining until I come' (John 21. 20-23). But John died, and the belief died with him.

Then the story was revived with new characters. According to the historian Roger of Wendover, in 1228 an Armenian archbishop visited England, and told the monks of St Albans that he had seen a man called Cartaphilus who was a witness of the Crucifixion. When Jesus had passed him bearing the cross, he shouted, 'Go on faster', and Jesus answered, 'I go; but you shall wait till I come.' Cartaphilus (a door-keeper in Pilate's house, therefore a Roman, not a Jew) was afterwards baptized by Ananias and given the Christian name Joseph; 12 centuries later he was living a quiet, penitential life, chiefly as a guest of religious communities. He would age till he appeared to be 100 years old and would then be miraculously restored to 30. Travelling Armenian priests seem to have made much of this tale, not only at St Albans but at Tournai in Flanders in 1243, and it is repeated in the chronicle of Matthew Paris.

Medieval accounts of the Holy Land hint at a second figure of the same type. In 1250 a French author, returned from residence in Jerusalem, speaks of 'Jehan Boute Dieu' as proverbially long-lived. In Italian legend the same person becomes John Bottadio ('Godsmiter'), the officer who struck Christ before the high priest, sometimes further identified with Malchus (John 18.10, 22).

The names given to the two immortals, Cartaphilus ('most beloved') and John, imply that the ultimate source of inspiration is the far earlier belief about the apostle. But at some stage, divine favour has been turned into punishment. The motif occurs in Buddhist legend: Pindola, an unworthy follower of Buddha, was condemned to be unable to die.

No direct links of influence have been traced, either between Pindola and the two medieval immortals or between them and Ahasuerus. But the inventor of the Jew must have known something of the older stories. He repeats the tale of the insult to Christ. He takes up and strengthens the idea of a curse. The name Ahasuerus suggests an acquaintance with plays that were acted at the Jewish feast of Purim. Based on the book of Esther, they brought in King Ahasuerus as a villain and laughing-stock.

The Wandering Jew has inspired many works of literature and art. There is a ballad in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Goethe and Shelley were attracted to the theme, Shelley more than once. The most recent literary addition is an episode in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Helena* (1950).

GEOFFREY ASHE*

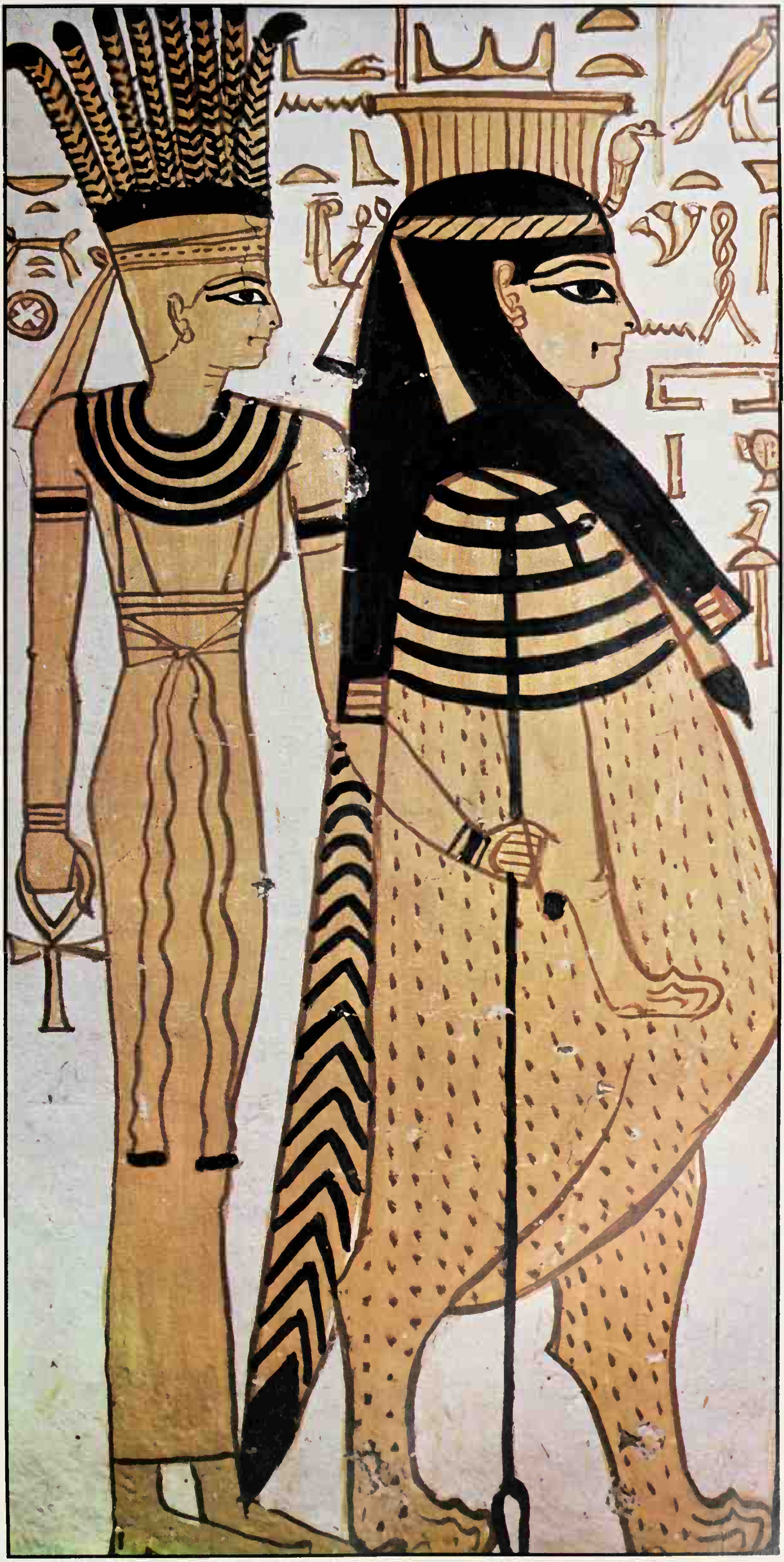
WATER

Water of life, water of chaos, water of destruction – these three principal elements flow and mingle in shifting patterns in the symbolism of water

THE SPANISH conquistador Ponce de Leon, governor of Puerto Rico in the early 16th century, set out with three ships in search of the land of Bimini, where he hoped to find the fountain of youth. What he actually discovered was Florida and, by a curious irony, near the site where he landed in 1513 there now stands the city of St Augustine, a famous last retreat for the old, who wait there in the sunshine for death.

The theme of the fountain of youth, the spring of living water, the well at the world's end, the water of life, is old and widespread. In numerous folktales and fairy tales there is a magic liquid which cures all diseases, brings the dead to life and makes anyone who drinks it immortal. Alexander the Great, it was said, went to the world's end to find the water of immortality. Cranach's painting of *The Fountain of Youth* shows old women entering the water which transforms them into young girls, and in Bosch's *Garden of Terrestrial Delights* a fountain of curious and alarming design is the source of the river of life which waters Eden (see ALEXANDER THE GREAT; ELIXIR OF LIFE; FOUNTAIN). Correspondingly, lack of water is associated with death, not only in this world but in the next. In Near Eastern and Christian traditions the dead thirst for cool water, because they exist in dry, dusty places or in burning hot ones, where the water of refreshment and life is missing (see REFRIGERIUM).

Water is naturally linked with life because living things cannot survive without it, and liquids in general are regarded as life-giving. Rain makes the plants grow, babies are generated by sperm and nourished on milk, the chick forms in the liquid of the egg, the child in the womb is lapped in waters which break at its coming, the sap is the life of the tree, and blood is the life of men and animals for when they lose it they weaken and die. Intoxicating liquids are connected with life because they make people 'lively', and this



Grecht

Father and Mother Nile, from an Egyptian tomb of the 19th Dynasty: one of the principal strands in the symbolism of water is its connection with life – the rain which fertilizes the soil, the river which irrigates it

We wash away physical dirt with water, and so we wash away spiritual dirt with it too and this may be an essential pre-requisite for approaching the divine

is reflected in the words for alcohol in various languages – *aqua vitae*, *eau de vie*, *lebenswasser*, all meaning 'water of life' – and in the term 'spirit', referring to the principle which vivifies matter. Liquids are also life-giving because they flow, they move about while lifeless things stay still. Mercury was called quicksilver, 'living silver', because it is mobile, which was the basis of its importance as the 'spirit' in alchemy, and one of the processes in the alchemical work was the 'bath of rebirth' (see ALCHEMY; MERCURY).

The Spring of Eternal Life

The life-giving divine spirit and the life-giving rain are linked in Isaiah (chapter 44), when God says to Israel: 'For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring', and that God 'pours' his material and spiritual blessings on man, as rain pours from the sky, has become a common figure of speech. In Jeremiah (2.13) God is called 'the fountain of living waters'. In Ezekiel (chapter 47), the river of life flows out from Jerusalem to irrigate the desert, to freshen the waters of the Dead Sea and make it swarm with fish. The book of Zechariah (chapter 14), describing the coming 'day of the Lord' when God will become king over the whole earth, says that he will stand on the Mount of Olives and 'living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem . . . it shall continue in summer as in winter'. And the people will go up to Jerusalem every year to worship God and to keep the Feast of Booths. If any fail to go up, 'there will be no rain upon them' (except for the Egyptians, who did not depend directly on rainfall and so are threatened with plague).

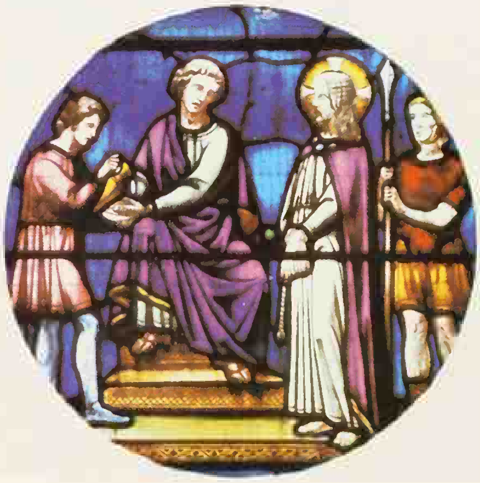
This prophecy links the river of life and the rain with the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, a harvest festival during which the people lived outdoors in arbours covered with foliage, in memory of the passage of their ancestors through the wilderness, when God had miraculously supplied them with water and had 'rained' manna from heaven for them to eat (Exodus 16.4). The green arbours recall the garden of Eden, which was watered by a river that divided into four rivers (Genesis, chapter 2). The new Jerusalem, the heavenly paradise of the book of Revelation (chapter 22) contains 'the river of the water of life, bright as crystal', which is the river of Eden, and the tree of life which stood in Eden.

It was during the Feast of Booths, apparently as the libation of water was being poured out, that Jesus said, 'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink' (John, chapter 7), and earlier he had told the woman by the well in Samaria: 'Everyone who drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (John, chapter 4). In Christian symbolism the four rivers of Eden were identified with the four gospels which brought the life-giving message of Christ, and the living water with the water which flowed from Christ's side on the cross.

Clean Hands and Pure Heart

'Cleanliness is next to godliness', the proverb says, and in many societies washing in water or being sprinkled with it cleans away pollution, the contamination which may arise from many sources, including blood, childbirth, sex, the dead, a sin or a breach of custom (though water is by no means the only purifying agent – fire, blood, sand and other substances have also been used). We wash away physical dirt with water, and so we wash away spiritual dirt with it too, and this may be an essential pre-requisite for approaching the divine. In Islam the faithful must wash before each of the five daily sayings of prayer, and tanks or wells are provided at mosques for the worshippers' ablutions. The priests of ancient Egypt shaved their entire bodies every three days and washed themselves in cold water twice each day and twice each night. In Hinduism a ritual bath, which achieves both physical and spiritual cleanliness, is most effectively taken in a river or a sacred pool or a tank provided at a temple. The 'ghats' or sites of ritual bathing are regarded as spiritual 'centres' at which the bather is linked with both earth and heaven. The European magical textbooks put a high value on cleanliness, to rid the magician of impurities on which a spirit might fasten and as a sign of dedication to the work in hand (see RITUAL MAGIC).

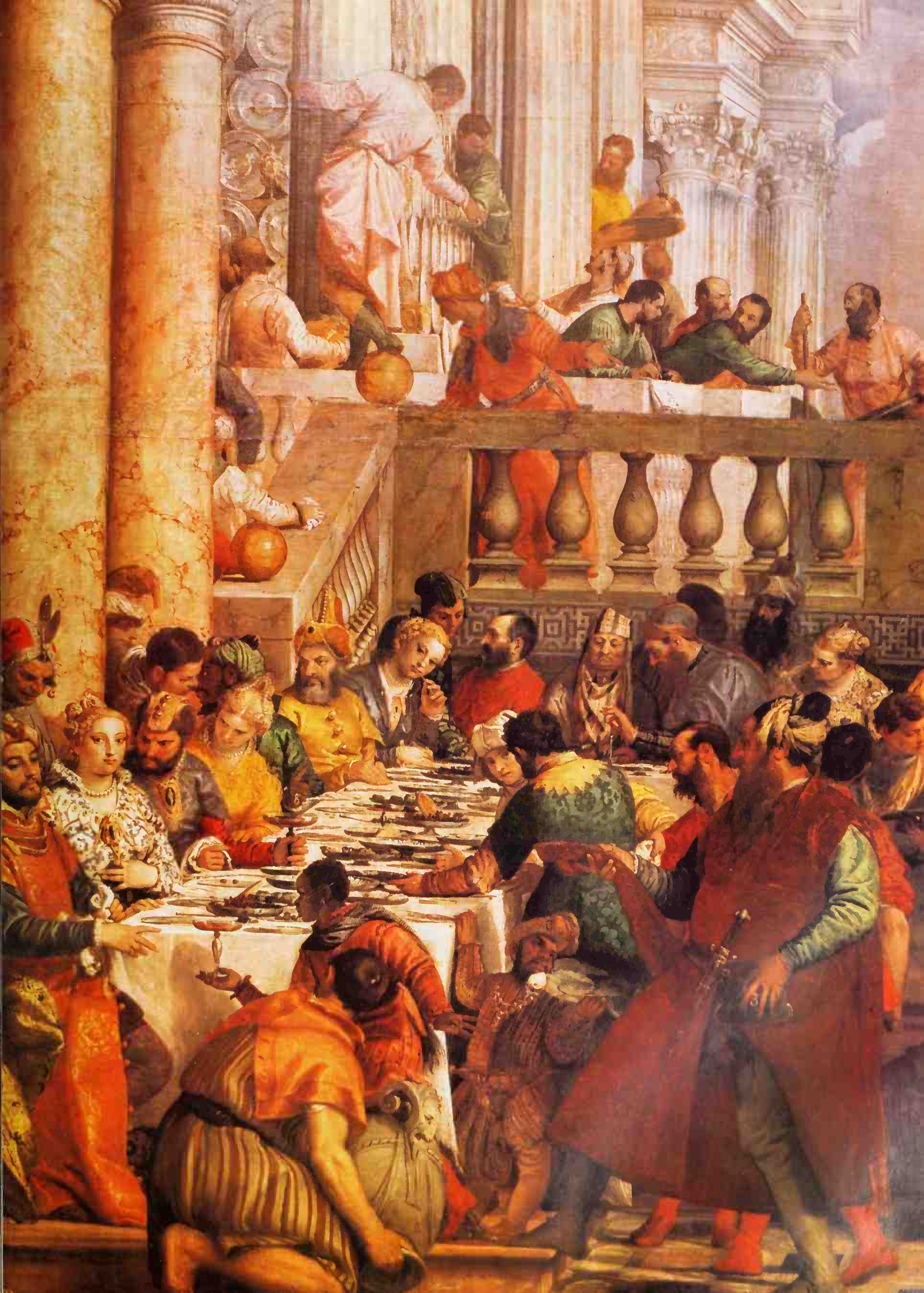
Below Physical dirt is washed away with water, and so symbolically is spiritual dirt and guilt: Pilate 'washing his hands' of Jesus, a stained glass window in Lincoln Cathedral
Right **Detail from Veronese's *Marriage at Cana*, where Jesus turned water into wine: liquids, especially intoxicating liquids which make people 'lively', are generally connected with life in symbolism**

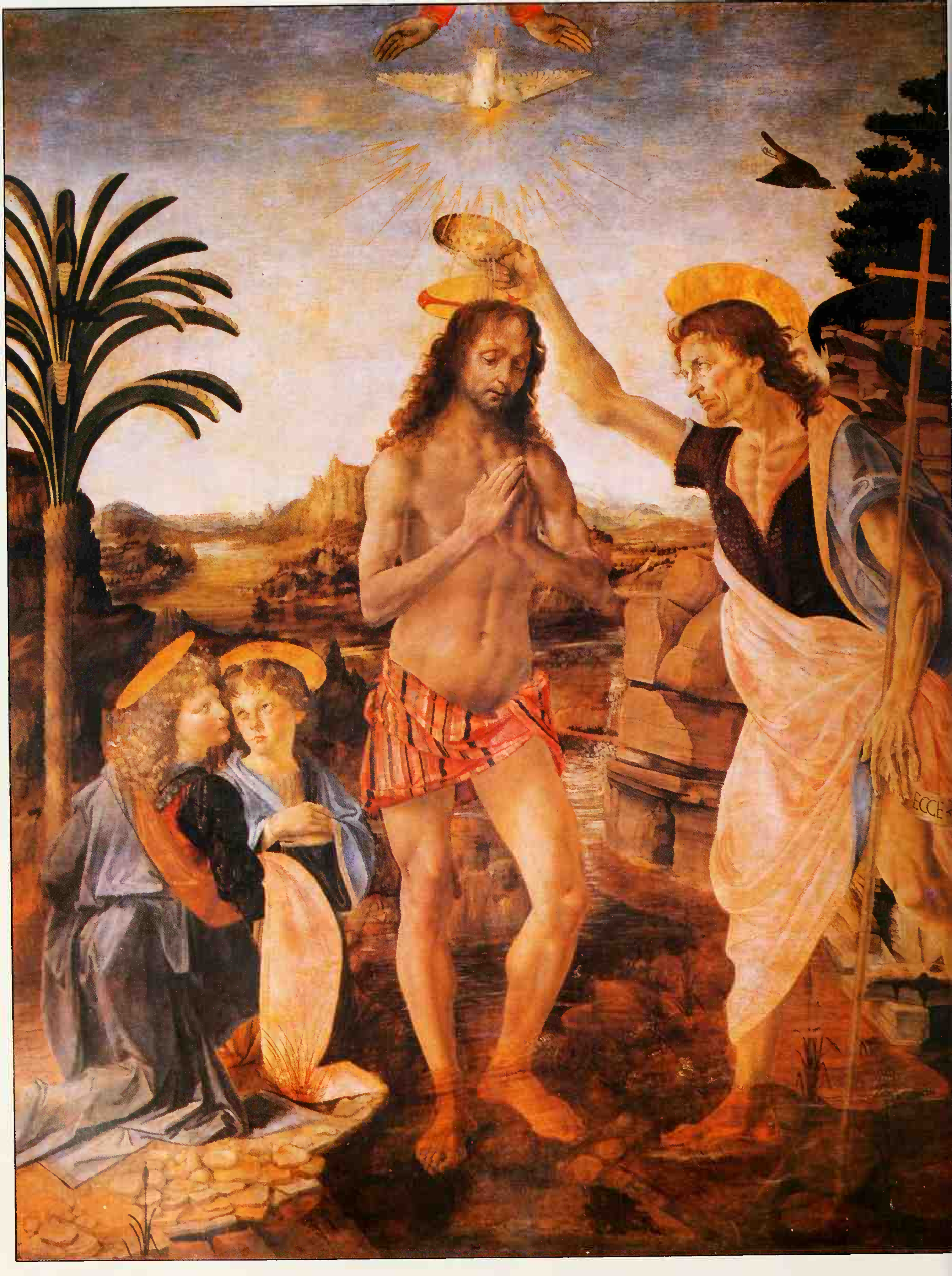

Sonia Halliday

There are numerous references in the Old Testament to ritual purification with water. In Exodus (chapter 30), priests are instructed on pain of death to wash their hands and feet before approaching the altar. Anyone who touched the bed of a menstruating woman was required to wash himself and his clothes in water (Leviticus, chapter 15), and people and things which had been in contact with the dead had to be sprinkled with water or washed in it (Numbers, chapter 19). In Psalms 18 and 24 clean hands are equated with 'righteousness' and 'a pure heart'. In strict Jewish households the hands must be washed before saying prayers and before any meal which includes bread. Jewish families which do not keep a separate set of dishes and glasses for the Passover meal may purify their ordinary tableware by dipping it in boiling water.

Roman Catholic priests wash their hands in a basin called a lavabo before saying Mass. 'Holy water', specially blessed by a priest, is provided at the doors of churches so that worshippers can sprinkle themselves with it before going in. It is also sprinkled on the congregation at Mass on Sundays, and it has long been regarded as a powerful defence against evil forces.

In Christian baptism, as in ancient Egyptian mortuary ritual, the two ideas of the




ECCE

God of Waters

By dread deeds thou dost answer us with
deliverance,
O God of our salvation,
who art the hope of all the ends of the earth,
and of the farthest seas;
who by thy strength hast established the
mountains,
being girded with might;
who dost still the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples;
so that those who dwell at earth's farthest
bounds
are afraid at thy signs;
thou makest the outgoings of the morning
and the evening
to shout for joy.

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it,
thou greatly enrichest it;
the river of God is full of water;
thou providest their grain,
for so thou hast prepared it.
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
Thou crownest the year with thy bounty;
the tracks of thy chariot drip with
fatness.
The pastures of the wilderness drip,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

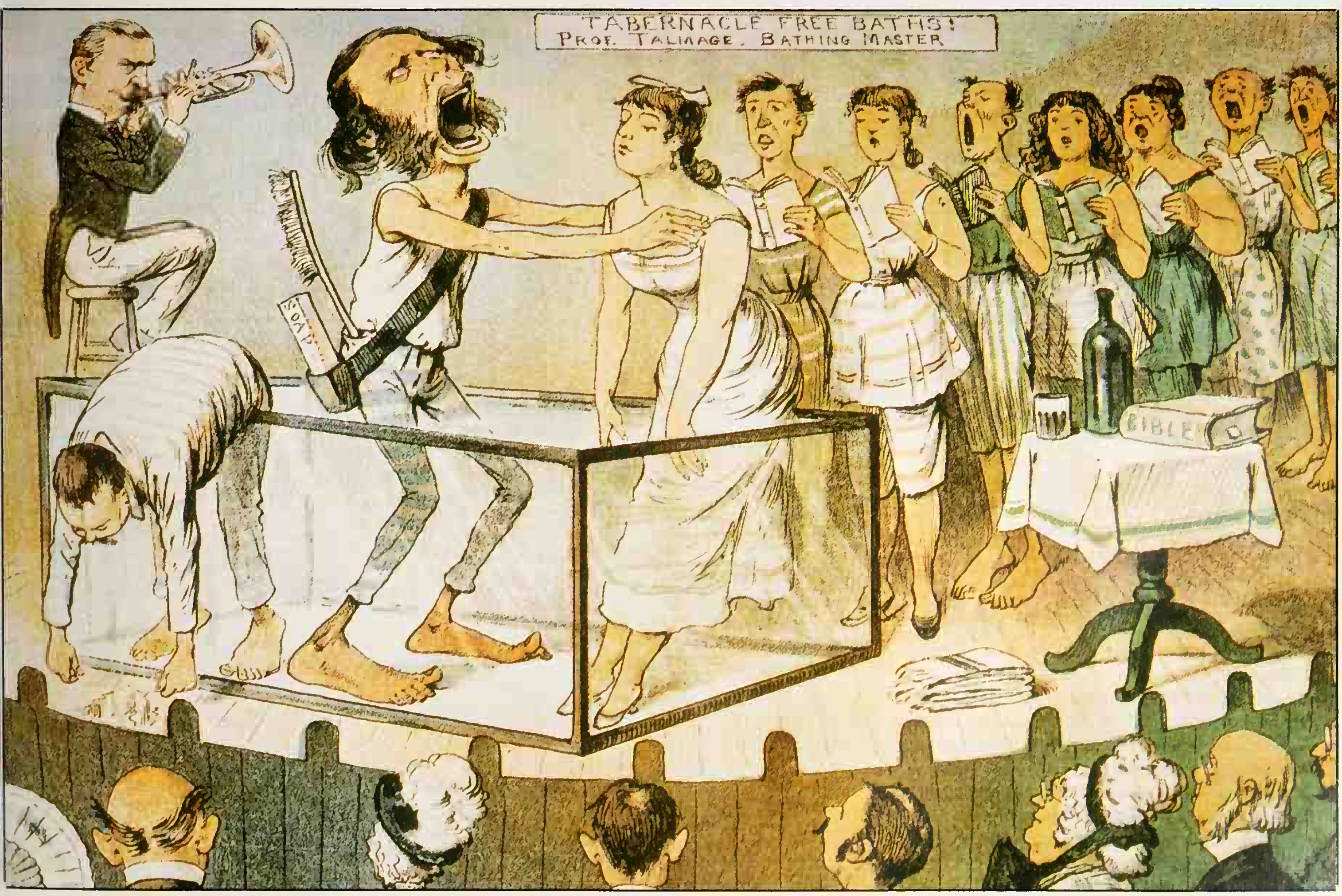
Psalm 65. 5-13

water of life and the water of cleanliness were brought together. The water which washes away dirt and corruption became also the water of life, effecting a spiritual rebirth. In Romans (chapter 6) St Paul presented baptism as 'a ritual death and rebirth, which simulates the death and resurrection of Christ' (see BAPTISM).

In the background of this view of baptism is the notion of water as *fons et origo*, the fount and origin of all forms of life. In some creation myths, there existed in the beginning a chaos of water, from which the world or the god who made the world emerged (see CREATION MYTHS). But though water is sometimes regarded as the vital principle – the rain which fertilizes the soil, the river which irrigates it – the vital principle may alternatively be air, breath or spirit (see BREATH), which injects vitality into the formless waters of chaos and creates forms – the structures and bodies of the phenomena of our world. Mircea Eliade comments on the symbolism of baptism and initiation by water in this light: 'Immersion in water symbolizes a return to the pre-formal, a total regeneration, a new birth, for immersion means a dissolution of forms, a reintegration into the formlessness of pre-existence; and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which form was first expressed.' This brings to mind the parallel, which the alchemists drew, between the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus at his baptism in the waters of Jordan and the Spirit of God moving over the primeval waters in Genesis.

The writer of 2 Peter (chapter 3) observed that God made the world out of the water of chaos and through this same water destroyed the world again in the Flood. Later writers saw a parallel between the waters of the Flood and the water of baptism, and saw Noah's ark, riding out the Flood, as a foreshadowing of salvation through Christ. 'Christ the firstborn of every creature,' said Justin Martyr (2nd century AD), 'has become

Left **In Christian baptism the two ideas of the water of life and the water of purification are brought together: *Jesus baptized in Jordan*, by Verrocchio and Leonardo *Below* Satirical view of baptisms at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, New York, from *Puck***



Chris Barker

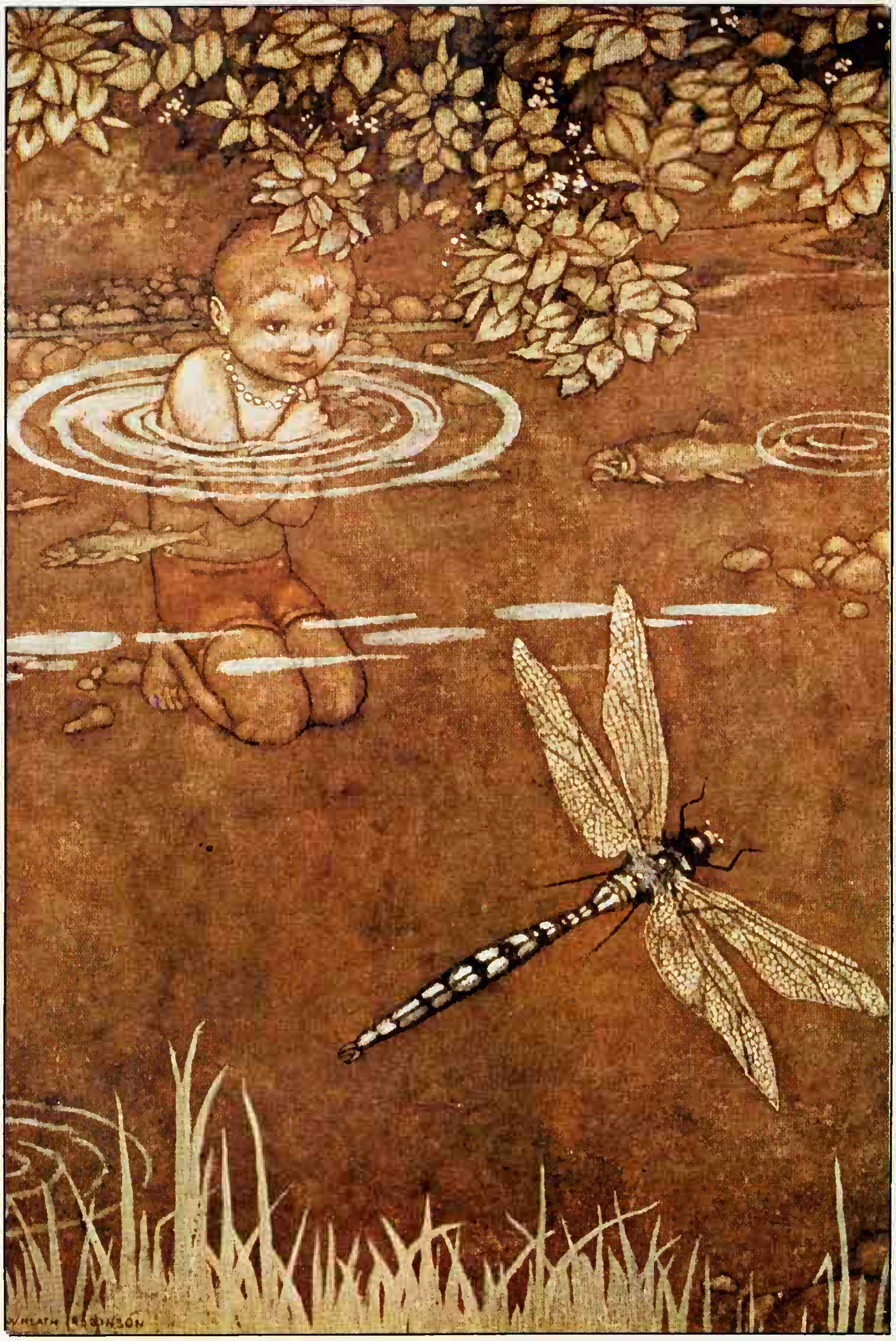


Illustration by W. Heath Robinson to Charles Kingsley's children's book *The Water Babies* (1863): small beings in human form were believed by many American Indian peoples to live in lakes, springs and streams, and were usually feared as uncanny

Victoria and Albert Museum/Mark Gerson

in a new sense the head of another race, of those whom he has brought to birth by water, faith and the wood that holds the mystery of the Cross, just as Noah was saved in the wood of the Ark.' Noah's ark is related to the symbolism of the Church as a ship, in which the faithful ride out the storms and perils of this world (see SHIP), and baptism was also taken to have been prefigured in the crossing of the Red Sea, the triumphant and miraculous passage through water in which the Israelites escaped from bondage in Egypt, as the Christian in baptism escaped from slavery to the Devil.

The story of the Flood, with its parallels in other traditions (see END OF THE WORLD; FLOOD), is an example of yet another aspect of water symbolism, which stems from the fact that too much water is as harmful to life as too little: you can drown in it. There is in water, especially in the sea, a power of violence, turbulence and destruction which threatens life and good order. In Babylonian mythology the monstrous sea, Tiamat, whose 'eyes' were the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, threatened to overthrow the gods. In Canaan, Baal conquered Yam, the god of seas and rivers and waters underground, and there are passages in the Old Testament referring to Yahweh's conquest of a sea monster, the ancestor of the Great Beast of Revelation (see GREAT BEAST) and more distantly of the threatening monsters which in science fiction come up out of the depths to destroy the world as incarnations of primeval chaos.

But the waters of chaos are also the waters of potential life. Many alchemists regarded their processes as a repetition, in miniature, of the process of creation described in Genesis. 'Perform no operation till all be made water,' they said, meaning that the material in the vessel, or spiritually the alchemist himself, must be reduced to the state of watery primeval chaos before 'philosophical mercury', the divine spirit of life, could move over the waters to create a new material or a new condition.

The Mind's Depths

As the fount and origin of life water may naturally be connected with woman. Aphrodite, the Greek love goddess, was born of the sea, the fountain is one of the emblems of the Virgin Mary, and in the Cabala the Sefirah Binah (see CABALA) is called the Mother, the Throne, the Great Sea. In modern magical systems it is linked with the waters of chaos in Genesis and with female symbols, the cup, circle, oval and diamond. Water is also linked with the moon, which 'flows' in the sense that it constantly changes shape, and which is connected with the flow of the tides and the ebbing and flowing of all the rhythms of life (see MOON).

Both water and the moon are connected by many modern interpreters of symbolism and mythology with the 'depths' of the mind, the unconscious, the swirling currents of the inner self. According to C. G. Jung, the sea or any large expanse of water appearing in dreams and fantasies is an image of the unconscious. Here again, the depths of the self are chaotic, formless, and pregnant with violence and destruction, but are also the wellsprings of the life of the conscious mind. 'If attention is directed to the unconscious,' Jung said, 'the unconscious will yield up its contents, and these in turn will fructify the conscious like a fountain of living water.'

(See also BRIDGES; DRAGON; ELEMENTS; FISH; GANGES; LANDSCAPE SYMBOLISM; MERMAIDS; MIRROR; NYMPHS; SEA; SPRINGS AND WELLS.)

RICHARD CAVENDISH

FURTHER READING: S. G. F. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near Eas* (Verry, Lawrence, 1963); R. Wild, *Water in the Cultic Worship of Isis and Serapis* (E. J Brill, 1981).

Many apparently magical methods of forecasting the weather have proved to have a scientific basis; but whether medicine-men and witches have been able to influence the elements, and if so how, has not been properly explored

WEATHER MAGIC

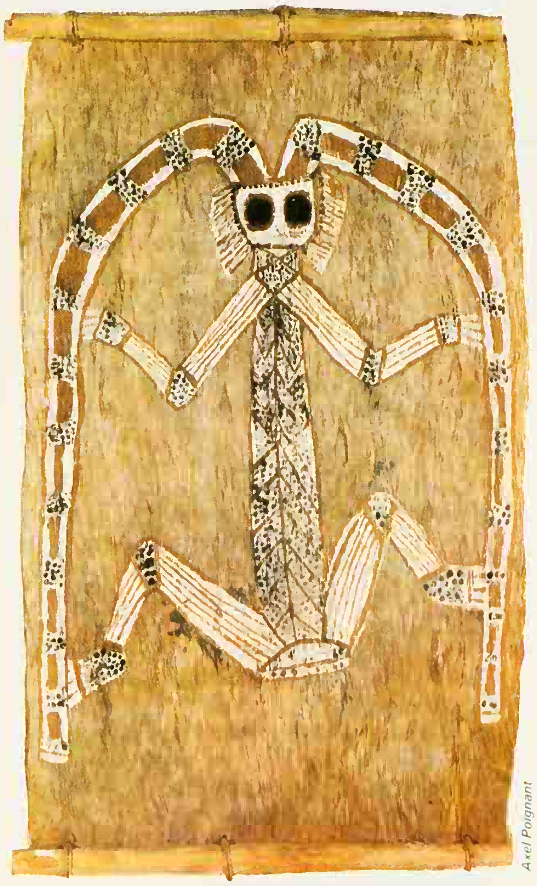
THERE HAS BEEN no time in human history when people have not needed to know something about the weather. Probably under modern conditions we have less knowledge of the weather than ever before. In the great civilized countries of the world, the red sky at night is no longer a warning that the cloud will disappear and fine weather will come on the morrow, but it tells us of the glare of neon signs in peace and of the burning of cities in time of war. We fill our world with artificial light so that it is only in the more remote areas that one can take a walk at night to admire the moon and the stars. Within the great city the moon is less brilliant than the street lights.

To our unsophisticated ancestors the world was a place full of magic, and most important of all the phenomena of Nature were the coming and going of rain and snow, which determined the growth of the food crops for the primitive farmer; and for the hunters the rainfall determined the amount of fresh grass available for the migrating herds of deer and bison. Sometimes quite alarming falls of coloured dust of unknown origin caused red rains, white rains and black rains which were carefully noted in the historical annals of past times. Hail storms occurred with sudden changes of temperature, sometimes blighting new crops by a layer of thin frozen ice, but more often actively destroying crops through the massive battering of larger hailstones crashing to the ground and beating everything flat beneath them.

Demons of the Desert

Then there were the winds; to most of us the winds have simply come from the four directions of north, south, east and west. We, who live in the great cities of the world just notice whether a day is windy or not, but to the seaman and the farmer each wind still has its own character, bringing its specific blessing or danger to the crops and animals. In addition to the normal winds there are the sudden and more violent winds, the waterspouts and the hurricanes; terrible things which cause tremendous damage as they sweep across the country. Sometimes, after a waterspout has passed, the ground is seen to be covered with small frogs or even fishes. Sometimes leaves of trees from far distant places are cast down as the storm passes. To primitive man all these phenomena are not only beyond his control, as indeed they are today, but also totally

British Museum/Michael Holford



Axel Poignant

'To our unsophisticated ancestors the world was a place full of magic', and weather phenomena were linked with gods and spirits *Left* Head of a basalt figure of the Aztec goddess Chalchihuitlicue, consort of the rain god: she was the spring rains, the whirlwinds, the whirlpools in the water and all young growing plants *Above* Australian aboriginal lightning spirit beyond his rational understanding.

All around the skies of the world lightning plays from time to time. To the North American Indians this is the flashing beak of the great thunder-bird as she flies through the storm. To Europeans these were the thunderbolts cast by the king of the gods. Even Mahayana Buddhism involves the use of the metal *Dorje*, which represents a thunderbolt, in the temple services.

Winds in a Bag

Among the greatest weather watchers in ancient times were the Etruscans of northern Italy (see ETRUSCANS). Their diviners, who cast prophecies from the state of the sky, achieved great fame, and it was customary in the early days of Rome for the Senate to send deputations to Etruscan cities to ask for advice when their own oracles seemed doubtful. The Etruscan soothsayers preferred to work from a high clear mountain with an even view of the sky in all directions; if it was situated above oak woods, so much the better. There were 16 wind directions to be regarded.

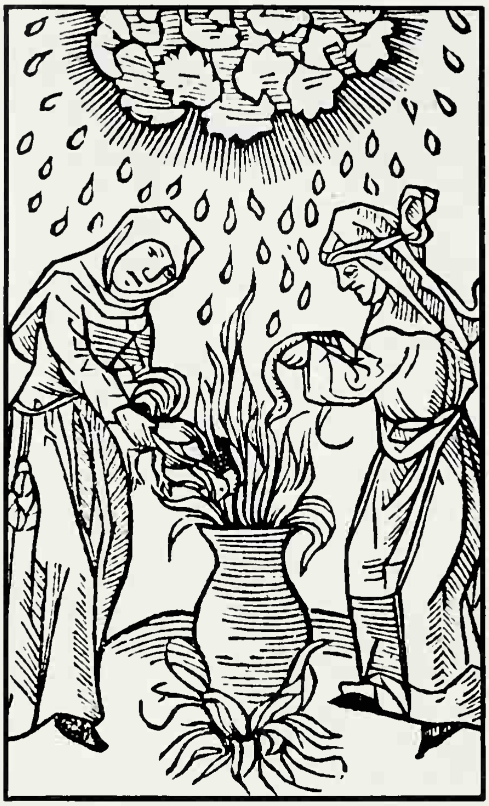
Particularly in thundery weather, the observers would wait on the hilltops, marking the direction of lightning flashes exactly, taking note of their brilliance and of the places where they appeared to strike. From this study they calculated the incidence of danger, and of blessings coming from the different directions. The augurs then assessed their particular meanings for the person or city on whose behalf they were consulting the elements.

For most people, knowledge of the sky sufficient to give a clue to tomorrow's weather is quite enough. But quite often a much fuller knowledge is demanded, even in primitive society, and this is expected from the weather specialists, the shamans (see SHAMAN) who have watched the skies sufficiently long and thoroughly to form judgements. They make their estimates from wind, cloud, the flight of birds and the colour of the sky, particularly at sunrise and sunset.

Such specialists included the magicians of Northern Europe, who were said to have the power to tie the winds in a length of rope. This power might be used for evil magic, by pulling the knots tight, when it was believed that the winds would be stopped and ships becalmed, with consequent loss of business and even health, if the calm lasted for a long time. The knots were used to tie up the bag in which the wind was symbolically trapped; the magician would use it like the bellows of a bagpipe for sympathetic magic, thus inducing the real winds to follow the example of the air being expelled.

Continual Rain in Paradise

Perhaps the most difficult of all forecasting performed by people living the simple life was that of predicting the coming of rain in semi-desert areas. Some successful meteorological observers probably possessed clairvoyant powers; in Africa, Masai shamans would sit on the hilltops near Mt Kenya and look at the sky, knowing from the position of the stars what season of the year it was. By the colour of the sky, by the appearance of little drifts of clouds forming near the snowcap of the mountain, they would estimate whether the rains would be early or late, in order to give the farmers a few days' warning so that the planting could be achieved in time. When the forecasts proved wrong the rainmaker would be considered to have been abandoned by his spiritual helpers and therefore of no further use. He would be lucky if he escaped simply with insults and a beating.



Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Witches working magic to create a hailstorm, a 15th-century woodcut

Among the Pueblo Indians (see PUEBLO INDIANS) there were also many wise shamans who observed the weather. In their semi-desert country, where the water supply was dependent largely on seasonal thunderstorms, it was important to know whether the storms were likely to be light or heavy, early or late. All good observers in the hilltop villages could detect at a glance which way a storm-cloud was moving, and by looking at the shadows of rain or hail falling from its base, they would be able to estimate any possible danger to their crops.

In central Mexico (see AZTECS; MEXICO) the weather gods were very important. Tlaloc, the lord of the rain and master of thunder, was a great spirit who controlled the four kinds of rain and brought life and fertility to the earth. His importance was so great that the high priest of the Aztecs was called the Tlaloc Tlamacazqui.

The consort of the rain god was the beautiful princess Chalchihuitlicue, who was the spring rains, the whirlwinds, the whirlpools in the water and all young growing plants. Between them they looked after the fertility of the material earth. People who had been struck by lightning or drowned were believed to have been claimed by these deities, and their souls would live in the wonderful paradise where flowers bloomed continually, there were myriads of butterflies, and thin rain fell constantly amid the rainbows. To the Mexicans of the semi-desert highland, this indeed was the most beautiful place which could exist.

The Celtic Druids were skilled in weather magic. Their traditional knowledge has been preserved for us in many little nursery rhymes and riddles which refer to the wind and the sky. Like all people concerned with the natural growth of crops, the Druids realized that the power behind the weather had spiritual connotations, that the life of man was closely linked with the movements of wind and rain.

Splitting a Cloud

At all times magicians, witches and ecstatics of various kinds have been credited with influencing the weather – not only the shaman tying knots in his rope, but also the witches in their magical rituals, flying through the air on their broomsticks. They swept along among the clouds, they brought mists, they threw the hail, they were able to charm the winds on the ocean so that they could float to sea in a sieve.

Even under modern civilized conditions, there are various curious phenomena to be found in the experience of witchcraft. In periods when the atmosphere is highly charged with electricity and the skin is dry, a group of naked dancers in a circle may find themselves producing sudden little flashes of fire all over their bodies. This is due entirely to the electrical static discharge between the atmosphere and their skins. These discharges may often be very beautiful in the dark, like veils of flashing pale blue diamonds appearing all over the dancer. Such things in the past must indeed have seemed magical and mysterious, although to a modern mind they are simply curious and rather beautiful.

Although nothing has been reported in recent years to compare with the storm-raising powers credited to medieval witches or with the bringing of thunder and lightning from the heavens which was attributed to priests and magicians in classical times, in practice it has been found possible to split a small cloud in unstable weather conditions. A few years ago, three friends walking along a path in thundery weather observed a small cloud blowing up directly towards them. On looking towards it and wishing that the cloud would divide, they witnessed the actual splitting of the cloud into two portions as it approached and then passed in its separate halves overhead.

Unimpressive as this experiment may seem, it did give a clue to the possibility that people much more devoted to such activity, and with a deeper occult knowledge, could have caused clouds to disperse.

The whole of this field of weather control by magic is insufficiently explored in modern times. Nevertheless, it is still possible for ordinary people to look at the sky and say what tomorrow's weather will be. That in itself is a phenomenon worth noting as an achievement of the human personality. (See also SKY.)

C.A.BURLAND

THOMAS WEIR

IT WAS THE CURIOUS FATE of Thomas Weir to enjoy during his lifetime a reputation for extreme religious zeal and piety, and to be remembered after his death as one of Scotland's most notorious witches. Born in Lanark about 1600, he was executed in Edinburgh in 1670 for crimes of which he had never been suspected until he suddenly and quite spontaneously confessed to them. In between, he had been well known as an ardent Covenanter, a violent anti-royalist during the Civil Wars, and a fanatical opponent at all times of the Established Church.

In 1641 Weir served as a lieutenant in the army sent by the Covenanting Estates into Ireland, and in 1649 and 1650 he was a commander in the City Guard of Edinburgh. He was then a major, and he was known by that title for the rest of his life. In his later years, as a member of an extreme Presbyterian sect sometimes called the Bowhead Saints, he was renowned throughout Edinburgh for his remarkable gifts of extemporary prayer and exhortation. He always carried a black staff with a thornwood head, and leant upon it while he prayed; and it was noticed that, if he became separated from it for any reason, his power and fluency seemed to desert him.

In 1670, this respected man suddenly confessed to a number of abominable crimes, secretly committed over many years. He told the appalled and incredulous members of his own sect that he had been guilty of adultery with 'several and diverse persons', and of long-continued fornication with his maidservant; of incest with his stepdaughter, and also with his sister, Jean, from the time she was 16 till she was 50 years old; and of bestiality with animals, particularly one of his own riding-mares. His horrified co-religionists at first refused to believe these wild statements and then tried to conceal them. Eventually, however, the Provost of Edinburgh was informed. He not unnaturally concluded that the major was demented, and sent doctors to examine him. They reported that he was quite sane, and suffering only from an outraged conscience. Some ministers subsequently sent by the Provost also declared that he was not mad, but driven by 'the terrors of God that were upon his soul'.

Notwithstanding his posthumous reputation, Weir was never indicted for witchcraft, nor does he seem to have acknowledged that offence in so many words, though it formed part of the evidence at the trial. His sister, however, was accused of sorcery as well as incest, and confessed to both. One of the charges brought against her was that she had a familiar spirit. In fact, there is no evidence that she ever kept a familiar spirit in the usual sense of that phrase, but she admitted that, many years before, when she lived in Dalkeith, she had trafficked with messengers from the 'Queen of Farie', and with one of these she had gone through a ritual equivalent to the renunciation of her baptism. She also said that, in 1648, she and her brother had been transported in a coach 'which seemed all of fire' to Musselburgh, and there the major heard from the Devil news of the battle of Preston which did not reach Scotland by normal means for several days afterwards. As soon as they were both arrested, she drew the guards' attention to his staff, saying that it had magical powers, and that he had received it from the Devil himself.

While in prison, Weir was visited by several well-intentioned ministers, who urged him to repent and ask God's pardon for his sins. He would not listen to any of them. He said he knew he was already damned beyond hope, and that no prayers or exhortations could save him. 'I find nothing within me,' he declared on one occasion, 'but blackness and darkness brimstone, and burning to the bottom of Hell.' In that despairing state he continued until the end.

The evidence against both the Weirs depended almost entirely upon their own confessions. Several witnesses at the trial testified to statements made earlier in their presence, including one man who said he had asked Thomas if he had seen the Devil, and had been told only that 'any feeling he ever had of him was in the dark'.

Except for the evidence of the witnesses, there were only the confessions reiterated and steadily persisted in with a fervour that suggests the Provost's original suspicions may have been right. Both prisoners were convicted. The major was strangled and then burnt on 11 April 1670, his staff being burnt with him, and on the following day his sister was hanged. CHRISTINA HOLE*

Stories of men having the power to change themselves into ravening beasts have gained currency in almost every part of the world; a universality which suggests that the underlying idea emanates from deep within man's own mind

WEREWOLF

IN LEGEND, the werewolf is a living person who has the magical power to change his or her shape. In its bestial form it is a terrorizer, a killer, an eater of human flesh. These two elements – metamorphosis and murder – form the basis, and much of the substance, of the legend. But the werewolf's family tree is ancient, vast, and has many spreading branches. Some branches lead to the realm of revenants (those who have returned from the dead), where ghosts and vampires walk; others lead to evil sorcery, witchcraft and diabolism.

The idea of the werewolf is based on the acknowledgement of 'the beast in man' – our dual nature, which was no doubt as much of a commonplace in the Stone Age as in our Age of Psychoanalysis. Primitive mythology, naturally, makes much of the concept. Sometimes we are said to be descended from original, semi-divine animals, and sometimes the primitive feels a mystical and total identity with an animal, in the religious belief called 'totemism' (see TOTEM). In folktale, the culture heroes appear in indeterminate, human or animal form, like Coyote and the other tricksters of American Indian myth (see TRICKSTER). And there are numerous tales of intermarriage, when a humanized animal takes a human mate, perhaps producing offspring with the power of shape-shifting. These and other elements of primitive myth established the widespread belief in metamorphosis (see SHAPE-SHIFTING). When the assumed shape was that of a dangerous animal, a carnivorous enemy of man, the element of murder enters the picture as well, and the werewolf idea begins to emerge.

But not only the werewolf emerges. The world's folklore is full of other were-animals. ('Were' may come from the Old English word for 'man', and the corresponding terms in other languages are mostly similar compounds meaning 'man-wolf'.) Even those lands where the wolf is or was native have tales of other were-creatures: were-bears in Russia and Scandinavia, for instance. Lands without wolves have tales of were-hyenas, were-lions, were-crocodiles, were-jackals. In 1933 a respectable British doctor reported that he had seen two Africans turn themselves into jackals during a ceremony (see ATAVISM). But the were-leopard dominates the African tradition, assisted by sensationalized tales of the secret cult of the Leopard Men (see AFRICA), which gained much attention earlier in this century.

Similarly, were-tigers have been noted in the supernatural lore of India and other Asian lands; were-jaguars and sometimes were-snakes terrorize South American tribesmen. And though occasionally the were-animal is not of the most ferocious species (the Chinese have tales of were-foxes, for instance, rather like the cats or hares that witches are said to become, in European tales), in general the metamorphosis and murder theme predominates.

The Beast in Man

Ancient civilizations provide a number of antecedents for the werewolf. The maenads of ancient Greece (see DIONYSUS) flaunted the 'beast in man' in their ecstasies, and apparently sometimes wore wolf masks during their hunts through the forests. Also from Greece comes the legend of Lycaeon, a man who became over-zealous in his worship of Zeus and sacrificed a child to the god, making an offering of the child's flesh. Zeus changed him into a wolf, as punishment. But later there grew up an ecstatic cult of the worship of Zeus Lycaeus, in which the participants wore wolf masks.

Several notable Greek writers, including Herodotus and Plato, gave credence, or at least currency, to the werewolf idea, and so helped its spread into Europe in later centuries. In ancient Rome, Pliny discussed the idea seriously, Petronius mocked it in the *Satyricon*, and Ovid drew the Lycaeon story into the *Metamorphoses*.

Perhaps all the beast-men and wild men, found in folklore all over the world, are also distant kindred of the werewolf: the satyrs and centaurs of Greece, the Abominable Snowman, the human children fostered by animals, as in Kipling's story of Mowgli.

But the metamorphosis and murder is absent, or of minor importance, in such tales. Mowgli is not a werewolf, nor Tarzan a were-ape. More explicitly and directly behind our idea of the werewolf are two strands of folklore from the chillier regions of Europe. Northern peoples generally seem to have viewed the wolf with a fear and hate bordering on hysteria – the kind usually reserved for the worst supernatural monsters (see WOLF). Of course, the wolf was always a dangerous predator that cared little whether its dinner was a prize sheep or the shepherd. But there is more to the fear of the wolf than a mere antipathy to a beast of prey. The wolf seems to be regarded by Europeans as somehow in itself demonic. Wolves are semi-nocturnal, usually greyish in colour, and move in an almost ghostly silence. They have slanting eyes that glow yellow-green in moonlight, red in reflected firelight. And their chilling, banshee-like howl completes the eerie picture.

So the wolf unsettles us, on some deep atavistic level. Which may explain why even today men seek to exterminate this beast, while intending only to control other predators. The wolf has vanished from America (except Alaska), Britain, Germany, Switzerland and France. The French suffered terribly from wolves in the past, which explains the abundance of werewolf (*loup-garou*) tales from that country. In 1963 it was thought that a small pack of wolves had been sighted in France; and though some people believed it was just a pack of half-wild dogs, the mere thought of wolves returning to France made international headlines.

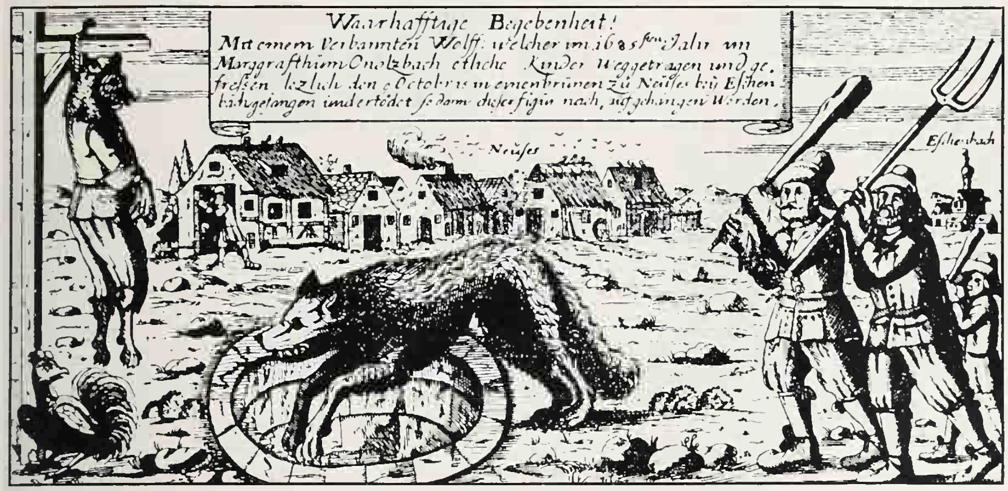
Wolves are still said to roam in eastern Europe, in Russia, and in Spain and Portugal. They exist also in Canada (a man was attacked by wolves in Ontario in 1963), but probably not for long. The hysterical urge to exterminate wolves is well described by the Canadian writer Farley Mowat, in *Cry Wolf*, a book that offers facts about the animal which counter its traditional type-casting as an evil, voracious monster.

No doubt that view will persist, and will pursue the wolf into extinction. Our responses have been conditioned by centuries of horror stories about wolves. Invariably these stories concern the wolf's cruel ferocity and murderousness, and his insatiable hunger. The Bible compares false prophets to 'ravening wolves' in sheep's clothing. A comparable disguise was used by the wolf in the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, which is part of the furniture of the mind of nearly every Western European and North American child. There are a number of old wives' tales of hunters caught out in the northern woods as darkness falls, hearing that echoing howl in the distance, approaching; or of that famous Russian sled, from which members of a family are thrown one at a time in vain sacrifices to a pursuing pack. In common catchphrases, villains grin wolfishly, and gluttons wolf down their food. Above all, there is the Fenris wolf, the most terrible monster of Northern mythology, and the eventual killer of Odin himself (END OF THE WORLD; SCANDINAVIA).

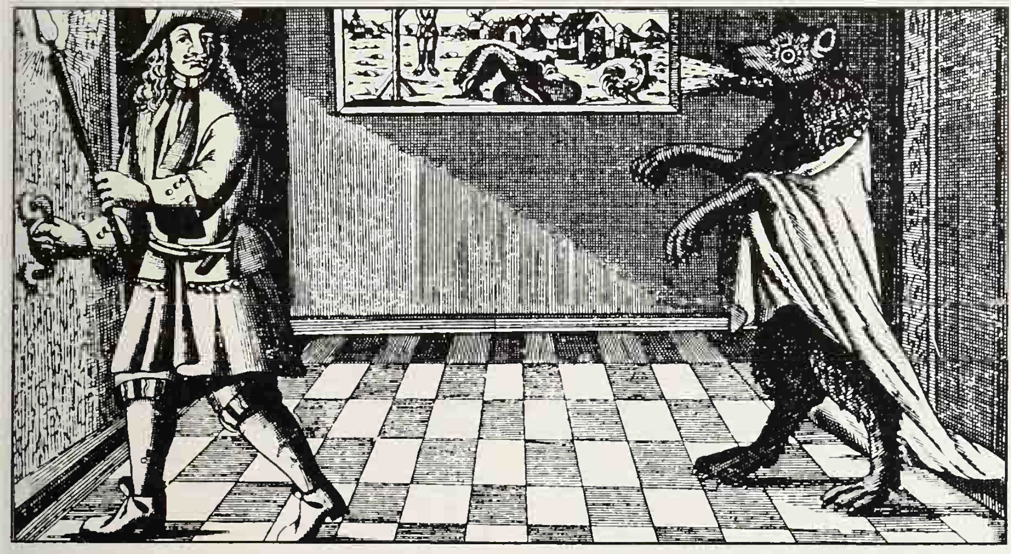
The Fenris wolf points to the second strand of folklore that has contributed directly to the werewolf legend. Scandinavian and Teutonic myth and folklore are full of the combination of metamorphosis and murder. The Norse gods took animal form even more often, it seems, than those of the Greeks. Scandinavian heroes are also often shape-shifters: one Bodvar Bjarhi took the shape of a bear to fight in a great battle in Denmark, recounted in the Norse sagas, and a bear motif appears in the tales of many other heroes (see BEAR; BEOWULF). Clearly there is a link here with the 'berserkers' of Scandinavian legend – the warriors who fell into a battle madness that made them preternaturally powerful, causing them to roar like beasts and foam at the mouth. We use 'berserk' to mean that kind of maniacal fury, but it is said to derive from the Old Norse for 'bear-shirt', referring to the fur garments of these warriors. It was not much of an imaginative step (for their victims especially) to believe that the berserkers not only released the 'beast within' but actually transformed themselves into wild beasts.

The werewolf's impressive European ancestry became focused in the Christian era's dark centuries of superstition and witch hunting. The old horror tales of those

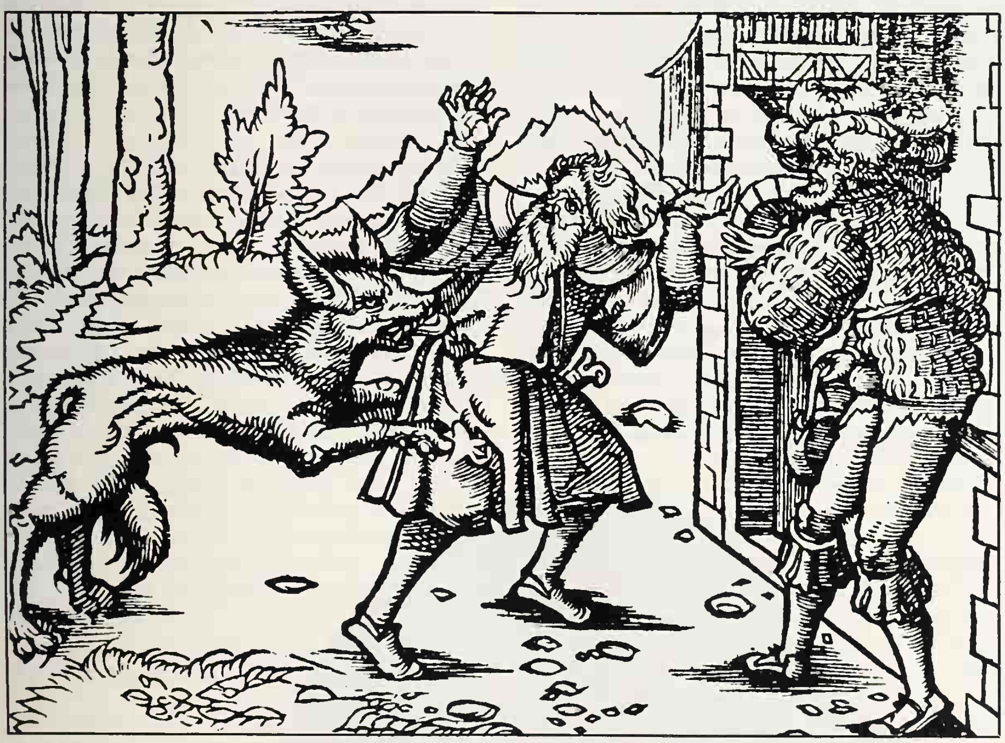
Man into ravening beast, a film still from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*: Robert Louis Stevenson's book used the theme of 'the beast within' which lies behind the stories of werewolves and other were-animals


Waarhafftige Begebenheit!
Mit einem Verbannten Wolff: welcher im 1685ten Jahr im
Marggrafthüm Onolzbach etliche Kinder weggetragen und ge-
fressen lezlich den 9 Octobris in einen brunnen zu Neüses bey Eschen
bach gefangen und ertödet so dann dieser figur nach, auf gehangen worden.
Neüses
Eschenbach

Mansell Collection



Mansell Collection



Chris Barker

'Northern peoples generally seem to have viewed the wolf with a fear and hate bordering on hysteria', and the human being who turns into a wolf and prowls in search of human victims is a persistent figure of folklore and fantasy
Top and *centre* The werewolf of Eschenbach, Germany, 1685, said to have preyed on children *Below* Werewolf attacking a man, from a 15th century German work *Facing page* The Wild Beast of Gévaudan, France, 1765, said to have devoured more than 100 people and to have a particular liking for the flesh of girls

centuries showed the witches in possession of the shape-shifting power, conferred on them by Satan. The witches were believed to change into cats, hares, toads, and the like. But the ancient wolf fear rose up too, became projected onto Satan's minions, and led to the idea that werewolves were witches who chose to take wolf form, ravaging the countryside as part of their diabolic duties. So the Renaissance witch trials recorded many gory accounts of werewolfism, especially in France and Germany. Often the 'confessions' of witches asserted that whole sabbaths changed into wolf packs; one old Latvian tale described a 12 day march at Christmastide of thousands of demonic werewolves, led by Satan himself in wolf form.

Sometimes the demonologists argued that werewolves were actual demons or imps, rather than metamorphosed human witches. But a few clearer minds, like that of Reginald Scot, author of *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), suggested that shape-shifting was unlikely, that certain kinds of insanity might lead people to imagine that they became wolves. Usually such insanity was ascribed to demonic possession and so although the mental illness known as lycanthropy was recognized quite early, the recognition had little effect on the superstition.

A Belt of Wolfskin

Out of the 16th century obsession with witches and like horrors come some of the world's most famous documented accounts of 'werewolves'. In 1573 a French village was terrorized by a monster that had killed and partially eaten several children. Then a group of villagers rescued another child from an attack by a huge wolf which, they swore, had the face of a local recluse named Gilles Garnier. Garnier was duly induced, by the usual means, to 'confess' to being a werewolf. The authorities, who seemed especially incensed that he had engaged in some of his gruesome feasts on meatless Fridays, ordered him to be burned alive.

Even more fearful was the punishment meted out to Peter Stubb, or Stump, in Germany in 1589. Stubb's 'confession' revealed him explicitly as a diabolist werewolf: he shifted his shape by means of a magical 'girdle' or belt of wolfskin, given to him by the Devil. And as a wolf, Stubb went forth on the Devil's work, to wreak 'his malice on men, women and children'. Apparently he had been doing so for some 25 years before he was caught. He sometimes killed livestock, and occasionally men whom he disliked; but he principally preyed on women and girl children, whom (he claimed) he raped, killed and ate. As a sideline he committed a good deal of ordinary if sinful fornication, as well as incest with his sister and his daughter, and capped his crimes, as the story goes, by killing and eating his own son. Finally he was captured, but the wolfskin belt was not found, which seems to have proved its diabolic origin to the witch-hunters' satisfaction: clearly the Devil had taken it back. Stubb died fearfully, under the most terrible tortures and mutilations.

Somewhat less ugly was the story of Jean

Grenier (see GRENIER), a clearly mentally defective youth accused of being a werewolf in southwest France in 1603. He brought it on himself, boasting of having killed and eaten many girls; and since several children had been killed in the area, he was believed and brought to trial. He claimed that he shifted his shape by means of a magic ointment and a wolfskin cloak given to him by a 'black man', whom he called 'Maître de la Forêt'. The judges sensibly decided that Grenier was suffering from the mental illness of lycanthropy, though they added that it was caused by demonic possession. Grenier was merely imprisoned for life, in a monastery.

Tell-Tale Signs

Since the days of medieval superstition and demonology, the werewolf legend – like so many others – has become a tangled web of older semi-pagan folklore and Christian strands of belief. But out of the tangle can be extracted a fairly clear picture of the werewolf's nature and habits, as he is known in modern European and American lore, and in those Hollywood films in which Lon Chaney Jr created the Wolfman.

The creature's appearance is fairly standardized, in the legends. When there are any visual clues that a man is a werewolf, they include extreme hairiness, straight eyebrows meeting over the nose, strong and claw-like fingernails, small flat ears, or sometimes pointed ears, and the third finger on each hand at least as long as the second.

In wolf form, the werewolf tends generally to be merely an extra large and ferocious wolf. But in some traditions (including the French) the shape-shifting is not complete, which adds to the werewolf's detectability. Gilles Garnier was said to have retained his human features while in wolf form; other tales speak of werewolves with human hands or feet. In the early 20th century, according to the French folklorist Claude Seignolle, a French farmer told of seeing two great wolves who conversed in human voices and who took snuff from a box produced from under the tail of one of them.

But it is rare for a werewolf, after the transformation, to be mainly humanoid – as is the Hollywood Wolfman, who after shape-shifting is simply a man with extra hair, teeth and agility. Even in the Middle Ages, when a hairy man began howling and saying he was a wolf, the experts generally agreed that he was mentally ill, suffering from lycanthropy. If he was a werewolf, those experts knew, he would be able to change into a wolf. Still, controversy often arose over occasional lycanthropes who claimed that they did change into wolves, but wore their hair on the inside. In northern Italy in 1541, one such claimant died under the knives of officials probing for proof of his statement.

These were the same kind of officials who generally agreed that werewolves had made a pact with Satan, who then bestowed upon them the power of metamorphosis. But it is clear that the Christian authorities were trying to patch much older werewolf beliefs onto their systematized accounts of devils. They did not succeed entirely: the seams show. For it is obviously odd and inconsistent that a would-be servant of Satan, who signed that pact, should ask only for the power of shape-shifting. One would have to be a Satanist of very limited ambition to want to be merely a werewolf; after all, any rank-and-file witch could change her shape – as the accounts of 16th century witch trials tell us – and a witch could also raise storms, wither crops, fly on a broomstick or other conveyance and cast a multitude of useful spells.

Of course, much laborious medieval argument arose over whether an actual metamorphosis took place, whether Satan placed the minion's soul in the 'effigy' of a wolf, or whatever. More rewarding, however, are the older, non-Christian ideas about how a werewolf becomes one in the first place. Several of these seem to involve the summoning of a demon to confer the power, but the being who is summoned is quite often obviously an elemental, a pagan spirit (like Jean Grenier's Maître de la Forêt).

How to Become a Werewolf

This conjuring up of an evil spirit is done by a complex ceremony, involving a magic circle, a fire, an incantation or two, application of magical ointment (like the witches' flying ointment) to the nude body, and final donning of a wolfskin cloak or belt. But the shape-shifting power can, in other traditions, come more easily. Sometimes it can come whether you want it or not – if you infringe some taboo. Italian folklore says that if you were conceived at the time of the new moon or if you sleep outdoors on a Friday under a full moon – you will become a werewolf. An obscure flower will, if eaten, confer the power of metamorphosis, according to Balkan legend; so will drinking from a stream where a wolf pack has drunk. Drinking water from a wolf's paw-print, eating a wolf's brains, or eating the flesh of a rabid wolf are the simple do-it-yourself magic for the would-be shape-shifter.

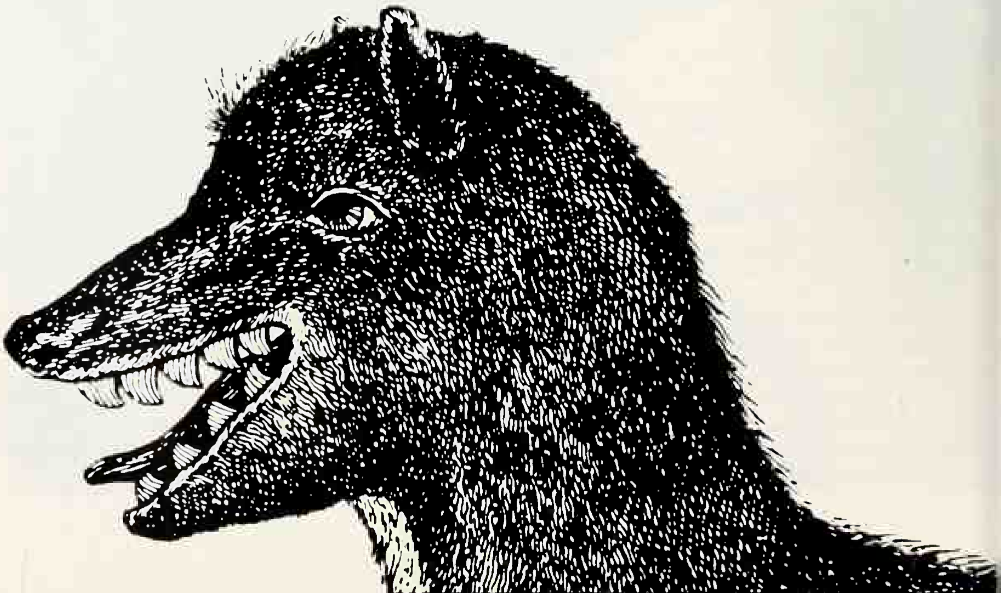
A few ancient writers thought that the power might be hereditary, while others thought that it might grow within a person who lived an especially evil life. An old French tradition tells of priests putting curses on criminals that forced them to be werewolves for seven years. And Paracelsus wrote that particularly evil, bestial men might return after death as werewolves.

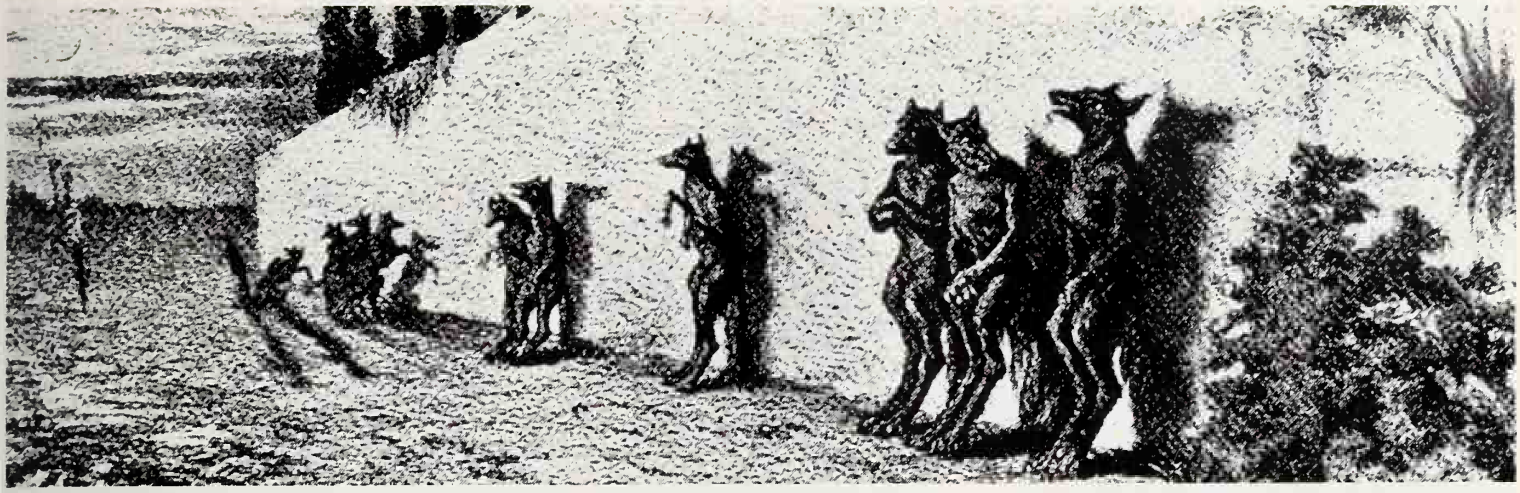
The ghost werewolf occurs in a few other places. England's cruel King John was said to have risen after death as a werewolf. And several ghost wolves seen in Britain during the 19th century had human features, which identified them as belonging to this species. It seems that this minor aspect of the legend affected Hollywood: the Wolfman was a resurrected corpse, turned into a werewolf by an accidental combining of magical elements like the plant wolf's-bane and a full moon. But the living men with shape-shifting powers vastly outnumber the revenants, in werewolf traditions.

The technique by which the metamorphosis is accomplished is often the same as that by which the power has been acquired: so many legends say that the change requires, each time, the full ritual and summoning of the evil spirit mentioned before. But as always, folklore likes its simple magics too. Often the mere act of putting on the wolfskin belt will cause the change. In a few gruesome variants, the belt is supposed to be of human skin, preferably from a criminal executed on the gibbet. Some French tales say the werewolf must immerse himself in water, besides putting on the belt, in order to change – though elsewhere in Europe, the werewolf is supposed to exhibit a fear of water, a clear transference from the 'hydrophobia' idea of rabies.

Quite often the werewolf changes by stripping himself under a full moon and urinating in a circle on the earth, a technique used by Guy Endore for the hero of his excellent novel *Werewolf of Paris*, as definitive a work for this body of legend as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is for the vampire. In a few tales, and in Hollywood's films, the full moon alone may effect the change; in a few others, though not as yet in films, stripping nude and rolling about on the ground may do the trick.

Changing back to human form may require the repetition of certain of these actions, like the rolling about or the immersion in water. Some legends say that the werewolf changes back automatically, at daybreak. Most tales agree that the creature instantly changes back to human form if it is injured or killed. From this idea come all those stories in which a hunter shoots and wounds a marauding wolf, later to learn that some local person has suffered an injury to the same part of the anatomy.





Chris Barker

The legends disagree widely on how a werewolf may be injured or killed. In many European tales, it can be caught or destroyed by the same means that would be used against an ordinary wolf. Peter Stubb, for instance, was pursued by men and dogs, and captured when he changed to human form in an attempt to outwit the pursuers. No one seemed surprised that he was as easily killed as any man; many other werewolves in European tales have been simply shot, clubbed or stabbed to death.

In other traditions, however, it seems that the power of the creature must be opposed by some kind of magic. In those traditions where werewolves are believed to be possessed by demons, the holy magic of the Church goes into action, to exorcize them. So a Catholic priest in French Canada is said, in an old tale, to have rescued a man from a loup-garou by magically changing it into its human form. And an old legend from colonial New England mentions a simpler exorcism, when a colonist drove off a pack of werewolves simply by speaking the name of Jesus.

Otherwise, rather more pagan magic is mingled with Christian elements in the werewolf antidotes. In England, Scotland and parts of France the creature is said to be immune to ordinary bullets; although, like vampires and witches, he can be killed by a silver bullet, especially if it is first consecrated in a church. In some instances a cure will be effected if the werewolf is called by his human name, or if he is called three times by his Christian name. French lore says that you may cure the loup-garou by taking three drops of blood from him, or merely pricking him to bleeding point, when he is in wolf form; it is not clear how you get close enough to him, in safety. And those who become werewolves involuntarily can cure themselves, it is said, if they have the strength of character to abstain from human flesh for nine years.

Monster From the Mind's Deeps

A fragment of fact, is to be found at the roots of the werewolf tradition. It has long been recognized that the mental illness known as lycanthropy is associated with a pathological condition in which the sufferer believes himself to be a wild beast and, as the old case histories show, develops a taste for raw or putrid meat, a desire to howl and run naked through the woods, and sometimes a wish to kill, rape and eat young girls. Although it is a rare malady, it may not have been so rare in past centuries; or perhaps other, more common types of sex murderers and child rapists of the past were assumed to be lycanthropes, the more so because such killings often involve an element of mutilation which might make Europeans think of wolves. Assuredly the werewolf is just as sexual a figure as the vampire (see VAMPIRE). But he lacks the sado-erotic subtlety of the vampire: werewolves are crude rapists and murderers, with a few ghoulish or cannibalistic overtones.

Les Lupins by Maurice Sand: these werewolves of Normandy were believed to steal into cemeteries and dig up corpses to violate and devour

Despite this basis of fact, the werewolf belongs rather in the realm of sado-masochistic fantasies. Robert Eisler has thrown some interesting light on these connections, in a theory based firmly on Jungian ideas. Eisler tries to trace the idea of the werewolf back to prehistory, seeing its origin in a primeval clash of cultures between peaceable, vegetarian early man and the brutal, fur-wearing, carnivorous creature that he was forced (by, say, an Ice Age) to become. The clash left scars on the collective unconscious that have still not healed.

The Lupins

In many parts of France, but more especially perhaps in Britanny, *Le Meneur des Loups* is a well-known figure. He is generally considered to be a wizard, who when the werewolves of the district have met and sit in a hideous circle round a fire kindled in the heart of some forest, leads forth the howling pack and looses them on to their horrid chase. Sometimes he himself assumes the form of a wolf, but speaks with human voice. Gathering his flock around him he gives them directions, telling them what farm-towns are ill-guarded that night, what flocks, what herds, are negligently kept, which path the lonely wayfarer setting out from the inn is taking . . .

In Normandy tradition tells of certain fantastic beings known as *lupins* or *lubins*. They pass the night chattering together and twattling in an unknown tongue. They take their stand by the walls of country cemeteries, and howl dismally at the moon. Timorous and fearful of man they will flee away scared at a footstep or distant voice. In some districts, however, they are fierce and of the werewolf race, since they are said to scratch up the graves with their hands, and gnaw the poor dead bones.

Montague Summers *The Werewolf*

Even in this over-simplified form of Eisler's theory, the argument cannot be easily dismissed. The werewolf *is* a monster of the unconscious, one to which folklore and superstition formerly gave fleshly reality and occasionally still do, in modern times: a French farmer in 1930 was accused of changing into a wolf at night; and in 1946 in America a Navaho Indian reservation was terrorized by a murderous beast which was widely reported as a werewolf. (Both Navaho and French traditions are rich in werewolf tales.)

But today the legend has generally retreated to a more subjective reality, without losing any of its horror. Nandor Fodor, the American psychologist and psychical researcher, has collected a number of dreams reported by people under psychoanalysis in which the werewolf theme – metamorphosis and murder – was brutally explicit. 'The old, savage lycanthropic beliefs have been relegated to our dream life where they are still active . . .' Fodor comments, 'the transformation is used symbolically as self-denunciation for secret deeds, fantasies or desires.'

Coming full circle, these psychological insights merely confirm that age-old and universal truth about the inner duality of man, the ravening beast within each of us. As Lord Byron put it:

Lycanthropy
I comprehend, for without transformation
Men become wolves on any slight occasion.

History as well as folklore shows that many of us are more than likely to let the beast take over, in an inner 'shape-shifting'.

(See also BERTRAND.) DOUGLAS HILL

FURTHER READING: B. Copper, *The Werewolf: in Legend, Fact and Art* (Hale, 1977); Robert Eisler, *Man Into Wolf* (Ross-Erikson, 1978); Montague Summers, *The Werewolf* (Citadel Press, 1973); I. Woodward, *The Werewolf Delusion* (Paddington).

The idea of an ancient secret wisdom of the West, emanating from the vanished Atlantis and handed on through the Celts and the Druids to the Grail traditions, has been much in vogue in this century

WESTERN MYSTERY TRADITION

'DO NOT LET IT BE FORGOTTEN that there is a native Mystery Tradition of our race which has its nature aspect in the Sun-worship of the Druids and the beautiful fairy-lore of the Celts, its philosophical aspect in the traditions of alchemy, and its spiritual aspect in the Hidden Church of the Holy Grail, the Church behind the Church, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

So wrote Dion Fortune (see FORTUNE) in 1934 in her book about Glastonbury, *Avalon of the Heart*. A member of the Order of the Golden Dawn (see GOLDEN DAWN) and later founder and moving spirit of the Fraternity of the Inner Light, she was an influential figure in building up the idea of a Western mystery tradition rivalling the oriental tradition beloved of the Theosophical Society. Another influence in the same direction was Rudolf Steiner (see STEINER), who broke away from the Society over its concentration on oriental matters and its attitude to Christianity.

The Lost Atlantis

At the heart of the idea of the Western mystery tradition is the ancient story of Atlantis which, according to Plato's account, was a powerful island-empire in the West, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, rich and fertile, highly civilized and advanced in technology and engineering, which embarked on a career of conquest in the Mediterranean area and was suddenly swallowed up by a gigantic cataclysm and sank into the sea. It is generally believed that this story is based on the immense volcanic explosion on the island of Santorin, or Thera, in the Mediterranean north of Crete in about 1500 BC, though this theory has recently been called in question (see ATLANTIS).

Plato's story of a lost paradise of beauty and high civilization, overwhelmed by a colossal catastrophe, has struck a resonant chord in the Western imagination ever since. There were numerous stories in the Middle Ages of hypothetical islands far out in the Atlantic. In the 16th century, after the discovery of the New World, it was argued that America was Plato's Atlantis, but, though still propounded well into the 19th century, this theory was too prosaic for the romantic imagination.

In 1882 a fresh wave of excited speculation was launched with the publication of *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*. The author, Ignatius Donnelly (1831-1901), was an erudite American lawyer and politician who had spent several years in Congress. Also a strong proponent of the theory that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, Donnelly maintained that the real Atlantis was where Plato said it was, in the Atlantic opposite the mouth of the Mediterranean. It was there that human beings first became civilized, and from Atlantis civilization was carried into Europe, the Mediterranean world and the Americas. The religions of Ancient Egypt and Peru were directly descended from Atlantean worship of the sun. The Garden of Eden, the Olympus of the Greeks and the Asgard of the Norse were all distant memories of Atlantis. The gods and goddesses of the ancient world and of Hinduism were originally the wise and powerful kings and queens of Atlantis, and Atlantis was the ancient home of both the Indo-European and the Semitic peoples. The memory of the catastrophe which swallowed up the empire survived in the numerous legends of the Great Flood.

Donnelly's ideas made a powerful impression on Madame Blavatsky (see BLAVATSKY), the formidable founder of the Theosophical Society, but where Donnelly had used conventional historical and scientific evidence to support his case, Madame Blavatsky added a fresh weapon to the arsenal of Atlantean theory – clairvoyance, through which she claimed to have seen the vast *Book of Dyzan*, written long ago on Atlantis in the lost Senzar language. This informed her own book, *The Secret Doctrine*, which came out in 1888. In it she described how the history of the cosmos moves through time in seven vast cycles, involving seven root races. The third root race lived in the lost continent of Lemuria in the Indian Ocean (see LEMURIA) and the fourth were the inhabitants of Atlantis. The Indo-European peoples are the fifth race, while the sixth and seventh are still to come. It was the Atlanteans who founded all the civilizations of world history and who transmitted their knowledge and wisdom to the Brahmins in India and the Druids in the Celtic countries.

Toltecs and Tyranny

The hint about the Druids was to prove particularly fruitful, but meanwhile a banker and amateur anthropologist named William Scott-Elliot claimed to have discovered more about both Lemuria and Atlantis by 'astral clairvoyance', a technique in which he has had many successors. It relies on the idea that a record of everything that has ever happened still exists on the astral plane. Through deep meditation, occultists believe, it is possible to penetrate this plane and observe the Akashic records or 'memory of Nature'.

Scott-Elliot's book *The Story of Atlantis* was published in 1896 and reissued by the Theosophical Society in 1962. He said that Atlantis occcupied most of what is now the Atlantic Ocean more than a million years ago. It was inhabited by warrior tribes, including the black aboriginals called Rmoahals, who stood ten to twelve feet tall. The ruling people were the Toltecs (who occupied Mexico in historic times), holding sway from their magnificent capital, the City of the Golden Gates. They exercised a tyranny similar to that of the Incas in Peru, stood eight feet tall and made slaves of the Rmoahals. The insistence on the great stature of the Atlanteans was probably meant to account for the myths of giants which have come down to us, while belief in the inferiority of black races was common among occultists of Scott-Elliot's generation.

Unfortunately, wrote Scott-Elliot, the rulers of Atlantis took to black magic, which eventually brought retribution in the cataclysm in which Atlantis sank beneath the sea. However, a group of Toltecs had emigrated to Egypt some 20,000 years ago. It was their descendants who designed the Egyptian pyramids, and it was also people descended from Atlanteans who built the pyramids in Mexico and Central America. Another group visited England and oversaw the construction of Stonehenge.

Rudolf Steiner accepted Scott-Elliot's astral researches. He saw Lemuria and Atlantis as two of the main stages in the history of the gradual descent of humanity over eons of time from its original purely spiritual form into captivity in matter. The Atlanteans were corrupted by evil spiritual powers which increased their propensity to misuse their sexual capacities, and those of them most entangled in sensuality grew to gigantic size. (Steiner himself was quite a small man). Even some of the greatest initiates were corrupted. The result was a succession of natural catastrophes which drove some of the Atlanteans to emigrate to Europe, Africa, Asia and America, where they founded all subsequent civilizations, and Atlantis itself finally sank beneath the vengeful waves some 11,500 years ago.

Image of the Modern West

Lewis Spence, a leading figure of the Druid revival in Britain, wrote three books about Atlantis in the 1920s. He believed that Atlantis had been preserved in 'folk memory' and in a 'world-intuition' of its existence in the distant past. He thought the Atlanteans were masters of occult arts and pioneers of astronomy and astrology, but did not accept the idea of their advanced technology.

A more important influence on ideas about Atlantis was Edgar Cayce, the famous American seer and healer (see CAYCE), who believed he gained access to the Akashic records in trance. He gave many readings for clients in which he described their previous lives in Atlantis long ago. His Atlantis had been a continent lying between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Mexico. His account of it as a technologically highly advanced society, with its aircraft and mastery of crystals, lasers and atomic power, influenced the contemporary tendency to see the lost civilization as an image of the modern West. The destruction of Atlantis by moral failure and inability to restrain the immensely powerful forces which its technology had unleashed came to be seen as an object lesson in what might well be in store for today's world.

Cayce died in 1945. His Atlantean material was collected and published in two books in the 1960s, *Atlantis: Fact or Fiction* and *Edgar Cayce on Atlantis*. He had predicted that part of the submerged continent would reappear from under the sea late in that decade near the island of Bimini in the Bahamas. It failed to do so, but numerous psychics and channellers have continued to

Kobal Collection

The vanished civilization (and its imagined technology) has featured on the cinema screen: scene from *Atlantis, the Lost Continent*

bring news of the vanished world. One of the most prominent is Frank Alper, who founded the Arizona Metaphysical Society in 1974 and published a set of books on *Exploring Atlantis* in 1982. According to his information, gained through channelling, the Atlanteans came originally from outer space in the year 77,777 BC to settle Atlantis below the sea – it had sunk years before – and developed the use of crystals to power their cities and transport systems and for healing and spiritual progress, an idea that has been taken up by other New Age authors.

Atlantis has also made its mark on fiction and the cinema screen. In Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) the ruins of Atlantis are found on the sea bed and in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tale *The Maracot Deep* (1928) an Atlantean city is discovered thriving on the ocean floor. One of Dennis Wheatley's books was *They Found Atlantis,* and a comic-strip novel of 1991 was entitled *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. G.W. Pabst directed an impressive silent film on the theme, *L'Atlantide* (1921), which placed the lost world in the Sahara Desert, but *Fire Maidens From Outer Space* (1956) and *Atlantis, the Lost Continent* (1961) are not rated highly by the film reference books.

The Druids and the Grail

A common feature of Atlantis speculation from the time of Ignatius Donnelly and Madame Blavatsky onwards was that Atlantis was both an extremely advanced culture and the parent of the early civilizations of the Near and Middle East. This made it possible to identify the great Atlantean sages as the channel through which esoteric wisdom of immense antiquity had passed to the wise of subsequent periods – the priests of Ancient Egypt, the Pythagorean philosophers, the Orphics and the adepts of the classical mystery cults, the gnostic and hermetic sects, the Cabalists and the initiates of esoteric Christianity (see ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY). Atlantis could be seen as the source of the whole complex of ideas which created the Western tradition of high magic, which passed on through the medieval alchemists to the Renaissance interest in magic, the Rosicrucians and the occult revival of the 19th century.

Some occultists in Western Europe and the English-speaking countries have focused attention on the religion of the Celts and their Druid priests and sages as a key element of this tradition of an ancient wisdom, passed on to small groups of initiates over the centuries and stemming originally from the vanished Atlantis in the West. Classical writers about the Celts had linked their belief in reincarnation with the Pythagorean theory of the transmigration of souls from one living body to another, and there was a tradition that either the Druids had been initiated into Pythagorean teachings or, conversely, that the Pythagoreans had imbibed the Druids' wisdom. In Britain and France from the 17th century on, a view of the Druids as sages and natural philosophers, possessed of a profound ancient wisdom, gained ground, and they were linked with Stonehenge and the other prehistoric stone circles (see DRUIDS).

This pattern of ideas was taken up by Dion Fortune and her immediate circle. According to Gareth Knight, a well-known writer on esoteric subjects, they assembled, but did not publish, information about Atlantis which came from fragmentary recollections of their own previous lives there and from advanced spiritual beings communicating on the 'inner planes'. The picture they built up was of an Atlantis ruled by a sun-worshipping theocracy headed by the High Priest of the Sun, to whom the king and the warrior caste, the scribes and craftsmen, were subordinate. Below them were lower castes and slaves of debased, animal-like black and yellow races. The sun cult, however, was only for public consumption and purposes of state. It was the mysteries of the Sea and the Stars which formed the real, secret religion of the initiated elite of priests and priestesses, the highest and wisest of whom were the priestesses of the Sea (one of Dion Fortune's novels was called *The Sea Priestess*). They remained faithful to the Path of Light even when the sun priests meddled with dark forces, selfishly misused their power, took to evil rites and so brought on the eventual destruction of Atlantis.

An Atlantean colony in Britain built Stonehenge and the Druids drew their knowledge and spiritual understanding from the Atlantean well. When the final cataclysm came, some of the virtuous priestesses and initiates were washed up on the shore of Lyonesse, the lost land now sunk beneath the sea off the Breton coast. Others managed to reach the southern shores of Ireland and Wales. Among the survivors was Christine Hartley, one of Dion Fortune's pupils, according to her subsequent recollections of her previous existence in the doomed Atlantis. Among them also, she recalled, were a priest named Merlin (meaning 'the man from the sea') and a priestess named Morgan ('the woman from the sea'), later to be known as Morgan le Fay. Both were to have many subsequent incarnations on the earth.

Both also, of course, play prominent roles in the Arthurian legends (see ARTHUR; MERLIN; MORGAN LE FAY). The undoubted presence of strong Celtic strands in the medieval Arthurian stories encouraged the identification of them as part of the Western mystery tradition, transmitted from Atlantis to the modern world; or at least of the more elevated and spiritual aspects of the legends, and so especially of the traditions of the Holy Grail – identified as the Christian incarnation of the sacred cauldron of life and rebirth in Celtic mythology (see CAULDRON; GRAIL).

The Tuatha De Danann

Ignatius Donnelly had provided a foundation for the belief that Celtic culture was directly descended from Atlantis. 'According to the ancient books of Ireland,' he wrote, 'the race known as "Partholan's people", the Nemedians, the Fir-Bolgs, the Tuatha-de-Dananns and the Milesians were all descended from two brothers, sons of Magog, son of Japheth, son of Noah, who escaped from the catastrophe which destroyed his country. Thus all these races were Atlantean.' The Milesians, Donnelly, thought, lived in Egypt, then in Crete, then in Africa, then crossed to Spain, and eventually after many generations invaded and conquered Ireland.

Irish tradition, as it is recorded in the 9th-century *History of the Britons* ascribed to the Welsh monk Nennius, spoke of three invasions of Ireland far back in the beginnings of recorded time by Partholon, Nemed and the Children of Mil. An 11th-century source knew of successive invasions of Ireland by Partholon, Nemed, Fir Bolg, Tuatha De Danann and the Children of Mil. The Tuatha De Danann, or 'people of the goddess Danu', were the great gods of Celtic Ireland. They came from the sea, by way of Norway and northern Scotland, according to the myth, with their Druids leading the way in a magical mist, and swiftly conquered the more primitive Fir Bolg, who already occupied the country. The Fir Bolg were backward farmers, but the Tuatha De Danann were skilled in magic and the arts and crafts. They subsequently withstood a ferocious attack by the Fomoiri, monstrous beings with one leg, one hand and three rows of teeth apiece, who came from the Isle of Man and the Hebrides, and in a decisive battle drove them in rout.

The Tuatha De Danann included the Dagda or 'Good God', the 'sun-faced' god Ogma, the god Lug, who was 'skilled in many arts', and the terrible war-goddess, the Morrigan. Their Welsh counterparts were 'the children of Don', who appear in the stories in the *Mabinogion*, and the names Danu and Don may be variants of a Celtic name which also survives in the names of the rivers Danube and Don.

The Milesians or Children of Mil in Irish tradition are the human population of Celtic Ireland, who are supposed to have come from Spain at a later stage of the legendary history. They settled down in the Emerald Isle and the Tuatha De Danann retreated to the prehistoric tombs and fairy mounds where they have lingered ever since.

The Lure of Avalon

Atlantean wisdom and magical power, according to the theory of the Western Mystery Tradition, were preserved in Ireland and the other Celtic countries by the Druids and injected by wandering Welsh and Breton minstrels into the legends of King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Christine Hartley saw King Arthur as a personification of the sun. 'Arthur then stands for the Sun, the giver of life, the ruler of the world. He is the gardener who makes the crops to swell; another version of his name is Artor, which means Workman.'

There are various magic cauldrons in Celtic mythology. The Tuatha De Danann remained immortally young and fair by drinking beer from a great cauldron in the otherworld. The Dagda owned a cauldron which never ran dry and which could bring the dead back to life, and the Welsh god Bran's cauldron similarly gave life back to dead warriors who were placed in it. The Holy Grail, the cup of the Last Supper, is the sacred vessel of plenty and immortality; the hero who achieves the Grail achieves union with the divine – which is the goal of high magic in the European tradition.

The Grail, according to a persistent tradition, was kept in secret at Glastonbury in the Isle of Avalon, first brought there by St Joseph of Arimathea in the 1st century (see GLASTONBURY). Dion Fortune had a house in Glastonbury and found there the powerful and inspiring magic of both the pagan and the Christian spiritual paths. To her the place was a 'gateway to the Unseen' and the English Jerusalem. 'Two traditions meet in Avalon – the ancient faith of the Britons and the creed of Christ. The older, its relics obliterated, its legends bent to a Christian purpose, is shadowy and veiled. Only here and there do we see clearly the lineaments of the ancient creed; but a veiled figure can be seen in the darkness of the racial memory, and its dim but awful presence is alive... In the days before the Fisher King was made custodian of the Graal, dark Morgan le Fay, half-sister to Arthur and pupil of Merlin, had her dwelling upon Chalice Hill. May not the still surface of the Well...have been her magic mirror?'

Dion Fortune mingled Celtic tradition with the Cabala, ceremonial magic and esoteric Christianity in her teaching. 'In the Arthurian and Grail legends,' she wrote, 'we have the Mystery Tradition of our Race.' She died in London, in 1946, but she was buried in Glastonbury as her heart desired. The rise of interest in esoteric matters in the 1960s brought a new wave of enthusiasm for her 'shadowy and veiled' tradition – Celtic mythology and magic. It has influenced the witchcraft movement (see MODERN WITCHCRAFT) and New Age writers have explored 'the ancient faith of the Britons' to bring the western mystery tradition to life.

FURTHER READING: L. Sprague de Camp, *Lost Continents* (Dover, New York, 1970 reprint); C. Hartley, *The Western Mystery Tradition* (Aquarian Press, London, 1968); M. Hope, *Atlantis: Myth or Reality* (Penguin Arkana, 1991); G. Ashe, *Atlantis* (Thames & Hudson, London, 1992).

HALE

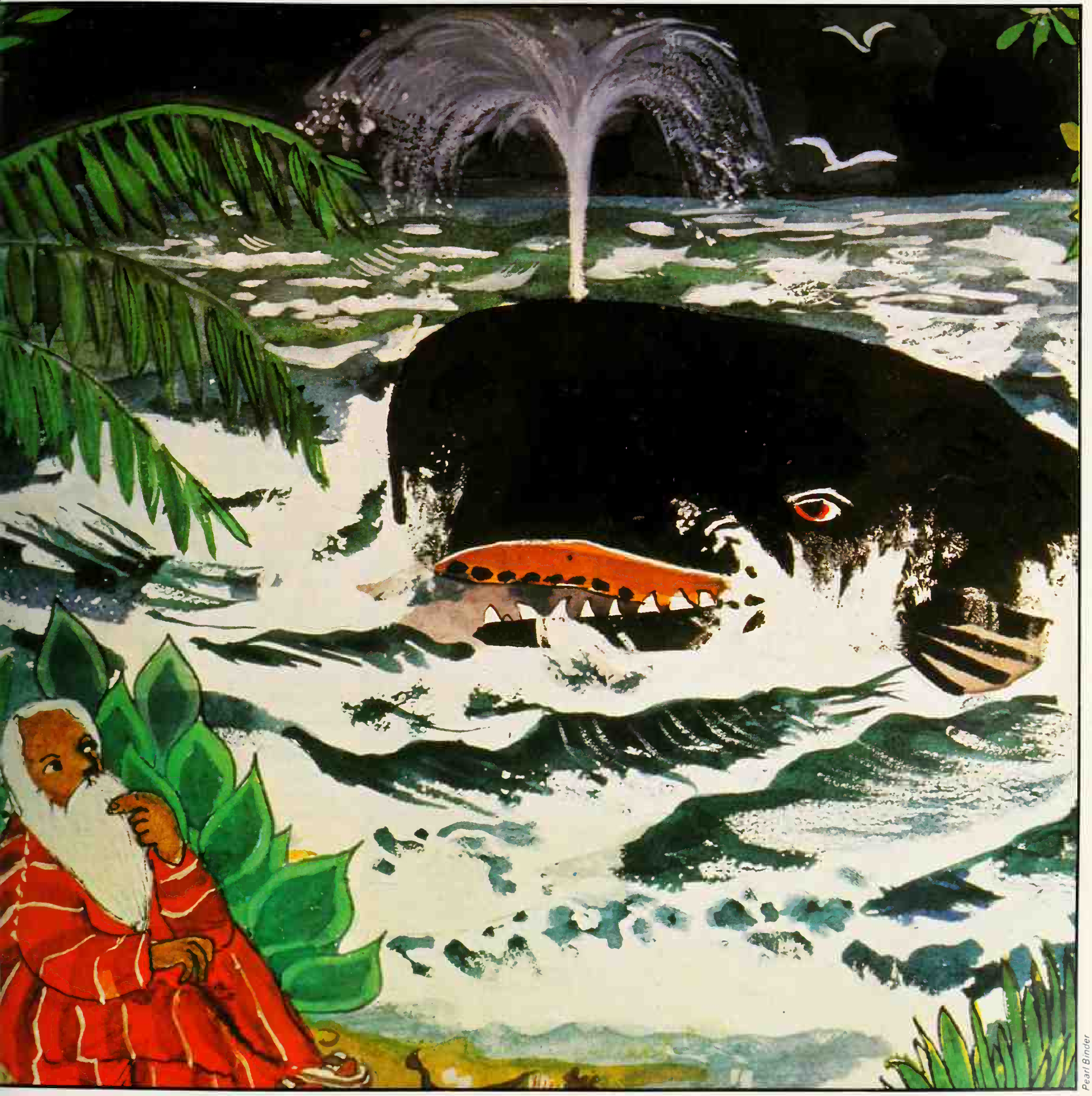
HE ANCESTORS of the whale were probably and mammals, whose structure became dapted to living in the sea. Because of its mmense size and energy, the whale has ttracted a wealth of superstition and folk-ore. In medieval times, for instance, it was egarded as an aggressive creature armed vith huge tusks, a misconception that robably arose from a confusion between the vhale and the walrus.

The whale is called 'Fastitocalon' in an nglo-Saxon bestiary and is described as deceptive floater on ocean streams, upon hich men build a fire and sink to the all of death; in other words, when the immense bulk of a whale was at rest on the ocean's surface it would occasionally be mistaken for an island by naïve sailors who, in attempting to land upon it, would be suddenly plunged to a watery grave. A similar story is told about the kraken (see KRAKEN). Perhaps because ambergris was an ingredient in perfume the whale was said to have so sweet a breath that fish were lured into its wide-open jaws. As a result of this mistaken belief the creature became the symbol of deceitfulness. It also stood for unintelligent immensity, violent passion and lust.

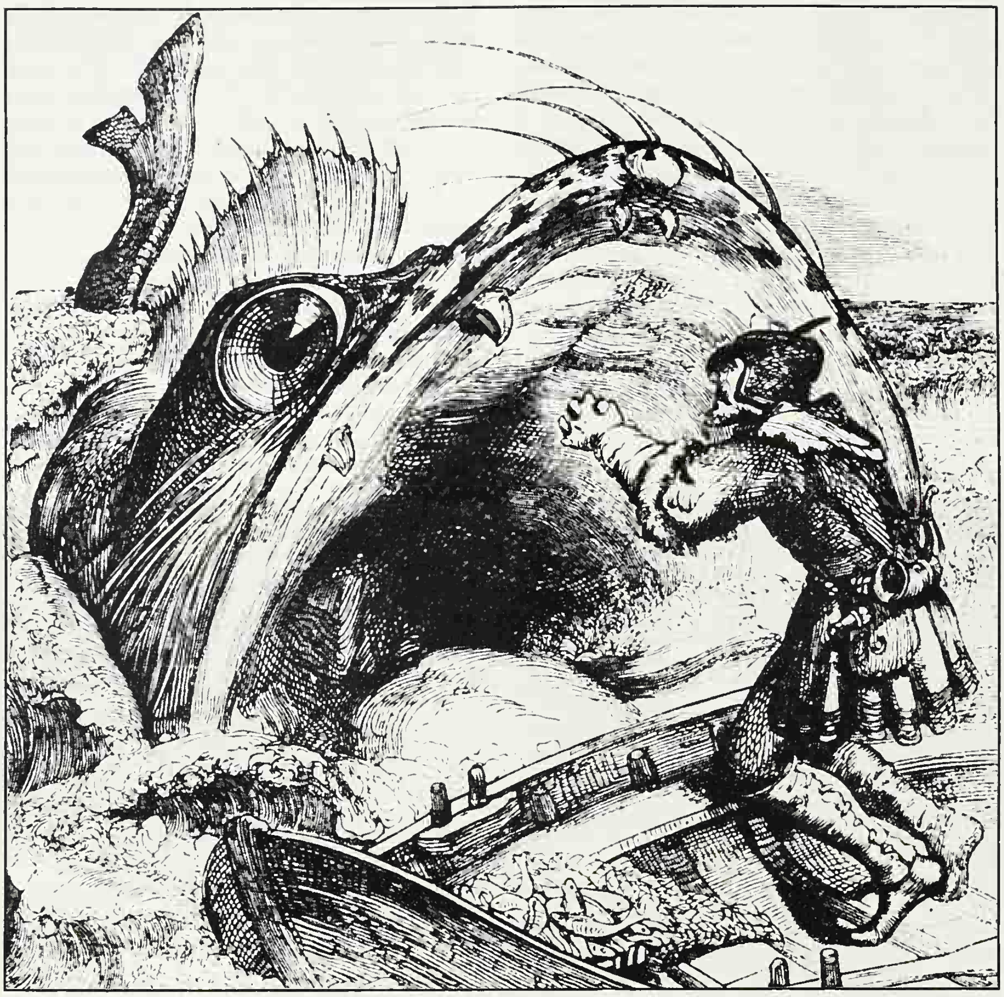
The whale was worshipped as Mamacocha, or 'Mother Sea', among the Indians on the east coast of Central America. The Arabians believed that a fabulous whale, Bahamut, provided the base upon which the whole world rested, and that earthquakes were the result of its movements. (The beast referred to in Job 40.15, by the similar name of Behemoth, is now considered to have been the hippopotamus.) The whale that swallowed Jonah (see JONAH), and in whose belly the prophet spent three days and three nights, is one of the ten animals that have been allowed to enter paradise, according to Mohammedan legend.

In Christian thought the whale became

According to Mohammedan legend, the whale that swallowed Jonah, and in whose belly the prophet spent three days and three nights, is one of the ten animals allowed to enter paradise: *Jonah and the Whale* by David Jones



Pearl Binder



An allegory of evil in Christian thought, the whale was the emblem of the Devil; its mouth has been regarded as the gateway to the otherworld, while its belly symbolized the infernal regions: a demonic whale threatens a fisherman, illustration from Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal* (1863)

an allegory of evil, the emblem of the Devil, the archetypal snare, baited with sweet aromas, which lured the unwary to eternal damnation. The whale's mouth has often been depicted as the gateway to the otherworld, while its belly has been said to symbolize the infernal regions.

Among some Indian tribes on the western coast of America, the whale was regarded as a totem animal, and was thought to have the power to sink enemy canoes. Whales' teeth and whalebone are both supposed to be extremely effective as amulets; in fact, the teeth have been used for that purpose since Neolithic times. Chieftains of Tonga, Soma and Fiji wore necklaces of whales' teeth, shaped like curved claws, as signs of high rank. Pieces of whalebone were highly valued as charms since they were supposed to confer some of the physical powers of the whale upon the owners.

Ambergris, a grey waxy substance found in the intestines of the sperm-whale, is supposed to be a powerful aphrodisiac. According to Boswell, the biographer of Dr Johnson, it produces 'a greater activity in the intellectual faculties, a disposition t cheerfulness, and venereal desires'.

Primitive whale hunts were associate with a number of specially devised magi rituals which were thought to be necessar because of the dangers involved in huntin Among the Eskimo, the hereditary role whaler verged on shamanism, and the whal was skilled in the art of psychic mimicry an the imposition of taboos. Ritual purit was essential among Greenland hunters the chase was to be successful, and anyon who wore soiled garments, or who had bee in physical contact with a corpse, wa excluded from the party. Chastity on th part of the tribal chief was obligatory i many communities. Siberian whale-hunte sought to pacify the mother whale, whos offspring they proposed to kill, with praye for forgiveness.

Among the Indians of the Bering Strait all work was suspended for four days afte a whale had been slaughtered, in the beli that its ghost lingered in the vicinit of its body for this length of time. Th Annamese, of what is now Vietnam, regarde even a dead whale washed up on the beac with considerable awe, and always burie the body with elaborate ceremonies whic included burning incense and firing cracker

Shape-shifting between the whale an other creatures of land and sea was n unknown. An Icelandic myth tells of a godless youth who was condemned to assume th shape of a whale as a punishment, and wh was killed when he attempted to swim u a waterfall. North American Indians hav legends of a terrible killer whale whic approaches the shore and assumes the shap of a ravening wolf. In 887 AD a snow-whit mermaid, 190 feet long, was reported an was said to be the metamorphosis of white whale.

The whale represents one of the grea cosmic forces of the universe. This symbolism is found in Herman Melville's *Mob Dick*, which tells how Captain Ahab pursue and finally destroys, the great white whal This has been interpreted as the etern conflict between good (Ahab) and evil (th whale), as the war in heaven which le to the downfall of Lucifer. On the othe hand, some have maintained that the whit whale is the spirit of absolute goodnes while the proud Ahab is evil.

WHEEL

THE WHEEL ranks with money and writing as one of the greatest single contributions to human progress and, like them, it evolved (and is still evolving) rather than coming into existence as the result of a unique act of invention. No one will ever know for certain where, when and how the decisive stages in this evolution were achieved, but present archeological evidence suggests that the first object we should recognize as a wheel was used under a kind of sledge in Mesopotamia, c 3500 BC. This early wheel was solid, and the axle was an integral part of it. It may have been another five centuries before a wheel which revolved about its axle was invented. The connection between this primitive cartwheel and the potter's wheel is not known, but some archeologists believe that the two kinds of wheel came into existence at about the same period.

At an early stage in its evolution, the wheel became a cult object, with religious, mythological and magic attributes. Here again, the actual process by which these attributes were acquired is lost in the mists of prehistory, but the wheel became associated with the sun, which Stone Age man had already represented as a disc in rock carvings, before the wheel as such was known. The association, being very ancient, is widespread. In Scandinavian myths, elves call the sun 'fair wheel', and in the far away Java Sea, the Balinese fire god is always represented as dancing on a fiery wheel, the symbol of the sun. Th ancient Egyptians used to place a winge solar disc over the gateway of every templ forecourt. The stages by which this dis evolved into a spoked wheel can be traced i places as far apart as Greece and Japan.

Wheel of Time

Connected with the sun wheel is the wheel a a symbol of the year, and also of time, whic is found in various Indian myths. In th belief of one Indian sect, the Jains (see JAINS time is endless, and is pictured as a whe of 12 spokes. The spokes are divided int two sets of six, one representing a 'descend ing' phase, in which good things graduall give place to bad, and the other an 'ascend ing' phase, which shows the opposit endency. According to the Jains, we are iving now in the fifth 'spoke' of the descending phase.

A similar notion of descending and scending phases is symbolized in the Vheel of Fortune of the Tarot cards, and here may be a link with ancient ideas about good and evil, or constructive and destructive forces in the universe. Thus, in the haracteristically dualist system of Manihean beliefs, the Creator builds a cosmic vheel, also representing the two opposed orces. The 12 spokes of the Jain wheel of time are obviously linked with the 12 qual parts of the zodiac. The Manichean osmic wheel also contains 12 buckets for he raising of souls, another reference o zodiacal ideas.

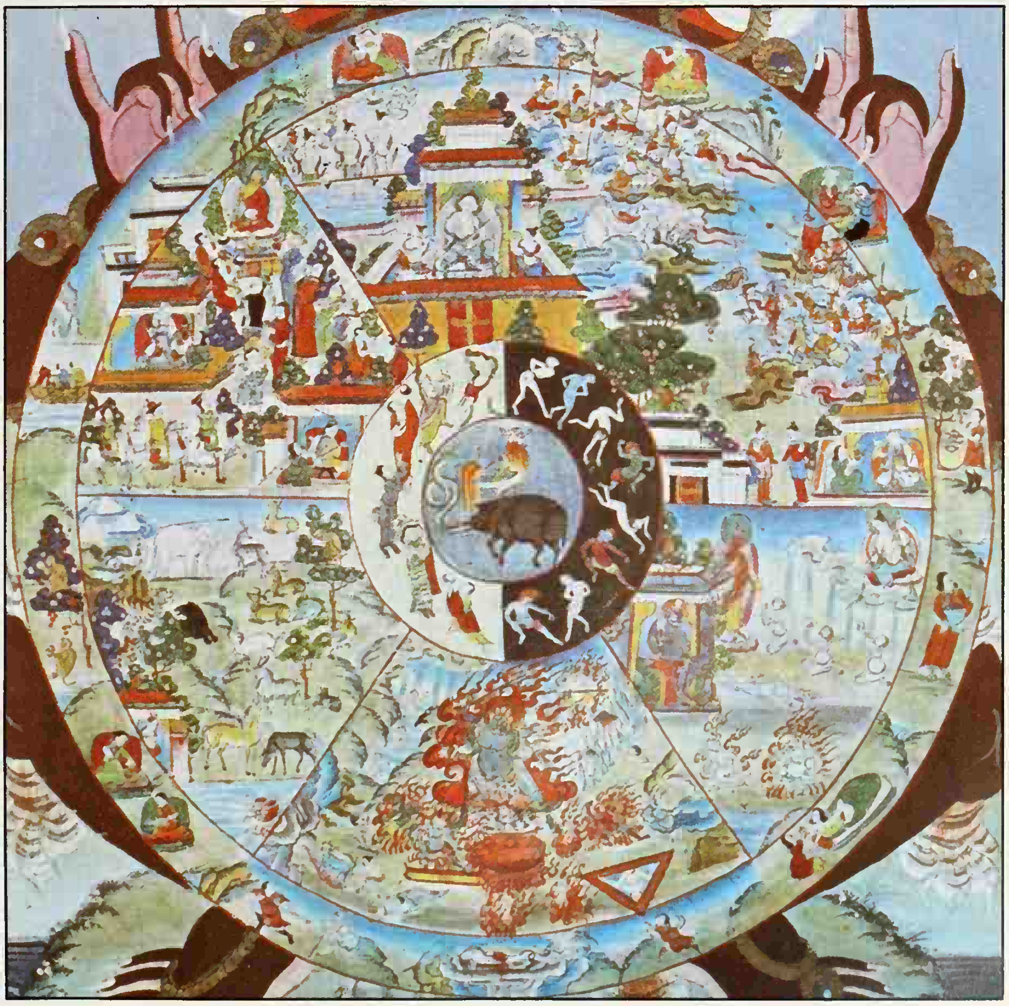
In magic and religion, however, the symolic wheel has four spokes more often han 12. In Greek mythology, Ixion is bound o an eternally revolving four-spoked vheel as a punishment for trying to seduce Hera, the queen of heaven. In his great vork on Zeus, A. B. Cook argued that Ixion epresents a long line of human beings who vere sacrificed in bygone ages 'as effete mbodiments of the sun-god'. Cook also elieved that a sun wheel like Ixion's was epresented in the love charm which Aphrolite devised to enable Jason to win the love f Medea. A bird, the wryneck, itself the ymph Iynx transformed by Hera as a unishment for seducing Zeus, was fastened o a magic wheel, which also had four spokes. n later Greek love magic, the bird was argely forgotten, and the charm was merely a simple wheel, pierced with two holes and hreaded with string, which was made to otate by pulling the string. This magic vheel, sometimes with jagged edges representing the rays of the sun, and often with our spokes, occurs frequently as a motif on ertain types of ancient Greek pottery. The same wheel was hung on the gables of a emple at Delphi, and an ancient Babylonian ablet, depicting an event which took place c 870 BC, shows a sun disc with two sets of four spokes suspended on ropes held in the hands of two divine beings poised on the roof of a shrine. The prayer wheel of Tibetan monks comes to mind in this connection, and here also there is an essential link with sun worship.

Temple wheels and prayer wheels, found in India, Tibet, ancient Egypt and Gaul, Greece and Japan, have a long ancestry, going back, as with many widespread ideas and objects, to the Babylonians. Worshippers were supposed to turn them in paying adoration to the gods, either imitating the rotatory movement of the heavens, or turning from one god to another. Some bronze wheels suspended on the doorposts of Egyptian sanctuaries emitted water, so that worshippers could sprinkle themselves. In medieval churches in Europe, the Wheel of Fortune hung up to the roof was a common sight. It was worked with a rope, and regarded as an oracle. The ancient Roman goddess Fortuna was depicted in statuettes and on coins seated on a wheel, and Roman writers from Cicero onwards frequently mention Fortuna's wheel. Fortuna is not the only ancient goddess to be represented with a wheel: so are Nemesis and Isis. Perhaps the inevitability and randomness, which can both easily be associated with the turn of a wheel, are present here, but the original connection may well have been with the worship of the sun. Scholars have drawn attention to the fact that one of Fortuna's temples (associated with her interest in farms and gardens) was dedicated on the summer solstice.

The summer solstice, or Midsummer Day (see MIDSUMMER EVE), was certainly associated with magic wheels (relics of sun worship) in medieval Europe. There is a possible link with Druidic worship in the custom at Douai, in northern France, of carrying a large Wheel of Fortune in procession before a wickerwork giant. But more commonly, a blazing wheel was rolled down hill, burning discs or wheels were flung into the air, or fresh fire was kindled by rotating a wheel on a wooden axle. Another custom was to set fire to a tar barrel and swing it round a pole. There is a possible reference to such customs in connection with the celebration of St John the Baptist's

Below **Prayer wheels in the Golden Temple, Tibet; they convey a blessing when turned to the right, the side of good, but a curse when the movement is to the left, the side of evil *Bottom* The belief that all men are shackled to the 'wheel of life', and that they must be reborn on earth until all karma is expended, is a basic concept in Hinduism and Buddhism: Tibetan 'wheel of life'**

William MacQuitty



© Nelson Stewart

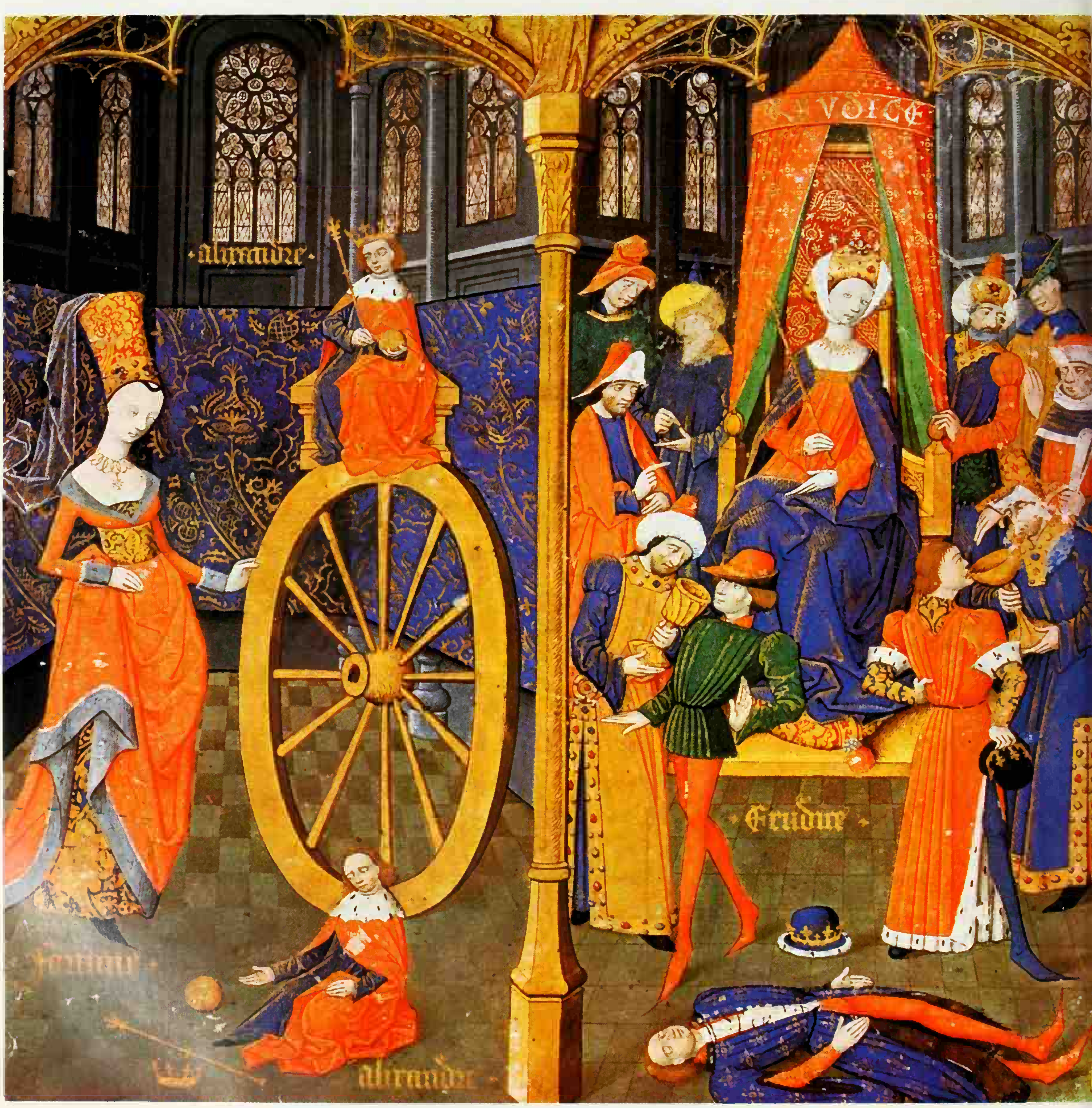
day as early as the 7th century. An 11th century writer describes quite clearly a wheel set alight and brandished in the air. An edict issued in a German principality in 1566 expressly forbids the use of fire wheels on St John the Baptist's day, which it lumps with 'other heathen and superstitious practices'. The wheel in question certainly was a relic of pagan sun worship and of imitative magic intended to ensure good weather for the harvest, but the connection with St John the Baptist was rationalized by referring to him as a 'burning and shining light' who was the forerunner of the true light.

The rolling of the wheel was taken to signify the rising of the sun to the highest part of its orbit before it must descend, which was again analogous to the role of the Baptist, who says of Christ (John 3.30), 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' The wheel, by a not entirely coincidental analogy, is also a symbol of contraction and expansion as well as of ascent and descent. But here, one cannot tell which idea came first, for the celebration of St John's day at the summer solstice, as the turning point of the year, must surely be connected with his prophecy about increase and decrease.

Ezekiel's Vision

More trivial magic was also associated with wheels in the Middle Ages, all of it no doubt deriving ultimately from the sun magic. For example, before the spring sowing, peas were allowed to trickle through the spokes
of a cartwheel in some parts of centra
Europe. In the Tyrol it was believed tha
some kinds of swelling could be cured b
rubbing against a cartwheel, and magi
powers of marksmanship were believe
to be conferred by mixing part of a molte
spoke from a wheel on which a miscrear
had been broken in the manufacture c
shot. In folktales in many parts of the worlc
magic wheels or wheel tracks guide the her
or heroine on the right way.

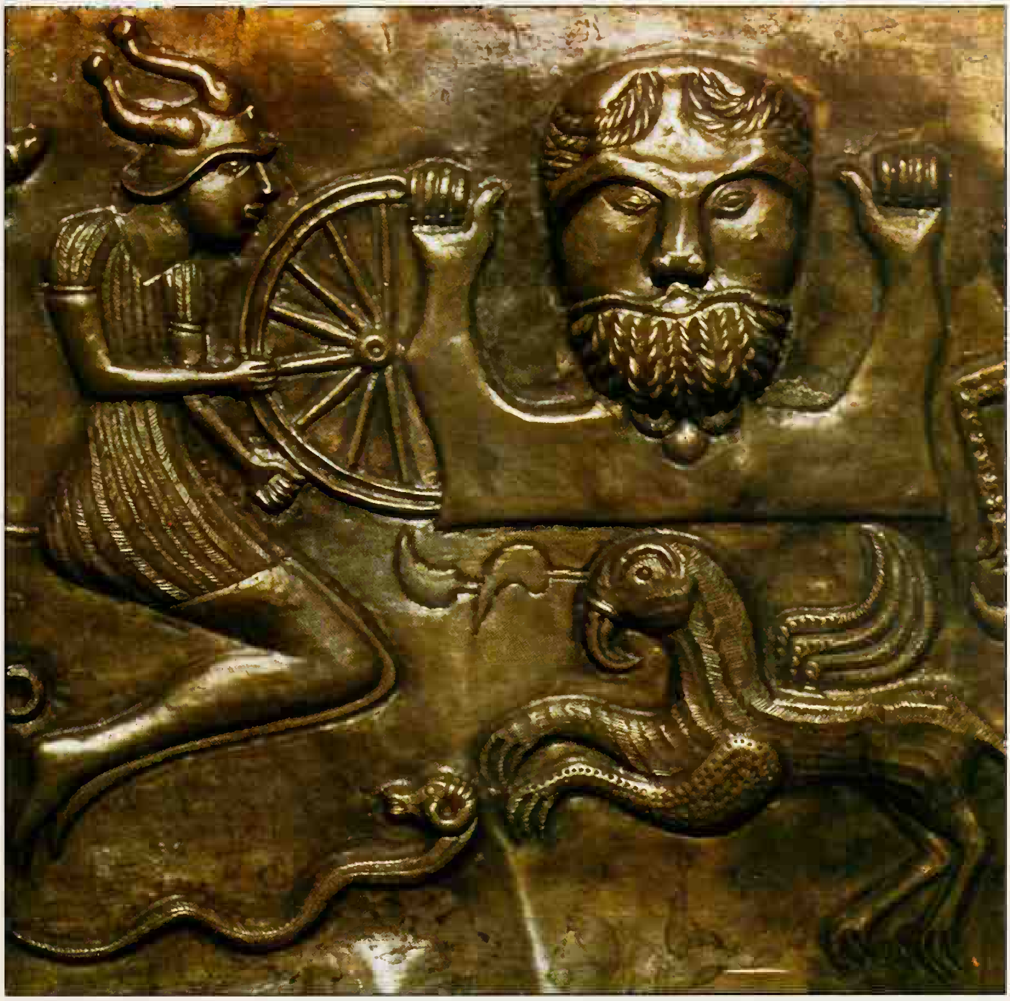
The wheel also has other more mysteriou
magical and religious connotations, goin
beyond its association with the sun. Th
famous wheels seen by the prophet Ezekie
in his vision (Ezekiel, chapter 1) are sus
ceptible of many interpretations: the 17t
century mystic Jacob Boehme, for example



he association between the sun and the wheel s widespread; in Scandinavian mythology lves call the sun 'fair wheel', while the alinese fire god is represented dancing on a iery wheel symbolizing the sun *Facing page* lthough the Wheel of Fortune is generally ccepted as being a symbol of the inevitability f fate, it may originally have been connected vith sun worship; one of the temples of the oman goddess Fortuna, who was depicted vith a wheel in statuettes and on coins, was edicated on the summer solstice: Fortune vith her wheel, from a 15th century French nanuscript *Right* Detail from the Gundestrup auldron; a Celtic deity who is thought to be aranis, 'the thunderer', is shown holding a poked wheel which may possibly be a symbol f the sun

ook them to be symbols of the spiritual and he natural life. Because a wheel is most imply represented by four spokes making cross, and because four is a natural umber of wheels for a vehicle, there is a ink between the wheel and the four elements f alchemy. But the symbolism can become o diffuse as to cease to be specific. So Jung eads a 'symbol of the self' into Ezekiel's vheels, and through the four faces of the reatures associated with the wheels he races a link with the four elements, thus onnecting alchemy with his own version of sychoanalysis. As Ezekiel remarked, there re wheels within wheels, and the subject is much larger one than most people in this vheel-crazed era of history would guess.

DAVID PHILLIPS


C. M. Dixon

WHITE

VHITE has both positive and negative ualities. It symbolizes good, light, purity, eace, modesty and innocence, gaiety and appiness; but it is also traditionally the olour of weakness, delicacy, infirmity and owardice. The more dominant associations f white are derived from its link with the ight-giving sun and the other heavenly odies, including the silver moon. Romans vore white robes when they sacrificed white attle in honour of Jupiter, and the priests of he Egyptian god Osiris were also robed in vhite.

In northern Europe the Druids sacriiced white cattle in their sacred groves, and n general white sacrificial animals are egarded as unblemished and so suitable as fferings to the gods. Zeus was said to take the hape of a white bull, representing the twin orces of solar light and creative energy, and he sacred steed of the sun in antiquity was a vhite horse. In Teutonic mythology the god Ddin is sometimes depicted riding on a vhite horse, and even today to dream of a vhite horse promises success.

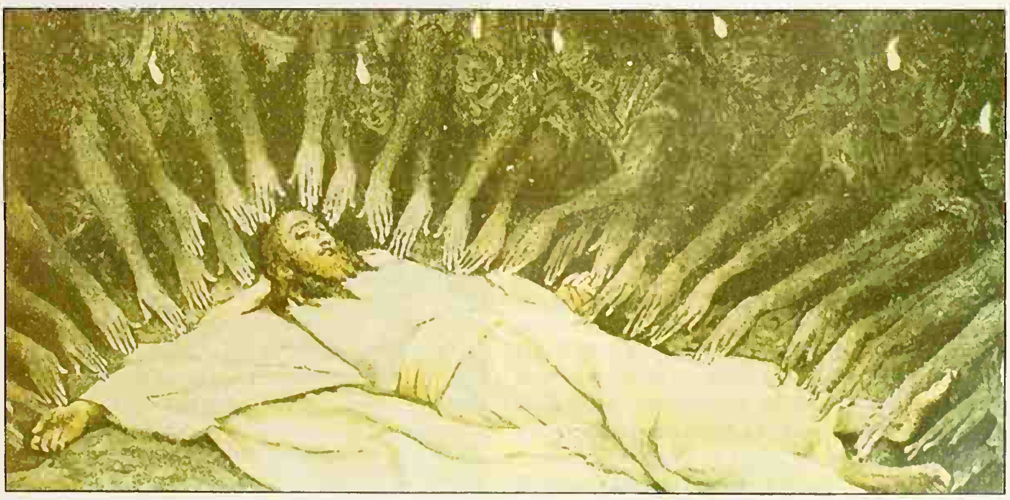
The Vestal Virgins, who tended the sacred fire brought to Rome from Troy by eneas, were clothed in white, to represent irginity and innocence. The same qualities elong to white in Christian symbolism, and bride wears white as a mark of virginity.

In Christian art, Jesus is generally shown obed in white after the Resurrection, and angels and the righteous dead are shown in white robes in heaven. Churches are hung in white at the festivals of all saints except martyrs. The white lily is an emblem of Easter Sunday, and processions of newly-baptized worshippers, garbed in white, gave Whit Sunday its present name. Curiously enough, in early 19th century England, the hallmark of a Radical was a white top hat, which was no doubt worn as a token of impeccable political principles.

White draws its negative symbolism from the fact that paleness has always been equated with bloodlessness and lack of vigour. The white feather is the badge of the coward and the white flag the banner of defeat. White could also be imposed as a badge of shame and repentance, as girls in the 17th century, who had loved not wisely but too well, found to their cost; they were made to stand in front of the congregation in church, dressed in white sheets.

In magic white was associated with the good magician and black with his opposite, the Devil's agent. Although the former were generally immune from charges of heresy, and the latter were the main targets of

White is connected with death, innocence, purity and the radiant light of the heavenly bodies, and in Christian art the angels and the righteous dead are shown in white robes in heaven: *Jesus Ministered to by the Angels*, a painting by James Tissot


Sonia Halliday

witch-hunters, white magicians were frequently sent to the stake during outbursts of witch mania, particularly in Scotland and on the mainland of Europe, under suspicion of working for the Devil.

The White Lady

There is a close association between white and death. Small white pebbles have been found in prehistoric graves, and until the late medieval period white was the colour of mourning in England, as it is today in China. The departing soul was commonly thought to take the shape of a white bird, usually a dove and occasionally a sea bird. Moslems believe that the souls of the just assume the forms of white birds, and wait beneath the throne of God for the resurrection. The belief that all ghosts materialize in white winding-sheets is widespread, and spectres have been described as emitting a curious white light.

Fairy lore contains many curious allusions to a mysterious being, called 'the white lady', who is sometimes seen in the vicinity of bridges and is an omen of death. In Wales and on the Welsh borders she carries a torch with a vivid white flame. More recently she has begun to haunt motorways in Britain.

White animals and birds are often regarded with awe because of their rarity. American Indians classed albino animals as sacred and, in the past, sacrificed the white buffalo and the white dog. The Chinese consider the white tiger to be the king of beasts, while a white fox with nin tails is regarded as an omen of good luck i many Eastern countries. In Scotland it wa customary to give young children necklace of white nuts in the belief that they woul turn black at the first sign of threatenin evil.

The racial problems of the 20th centur have been exacerbated by the Caucasia superstition that white is inherently superio to black, which is in some mysterious manne devilish and debased (see RACE MYTHS) This is in spite of the fact that a palli skin is symptomatic of weakness and il health and that the sign of physical vitalit and virility in a 'white' man is usually a rudd glow or a deep suntan.

(See also COLOURS; CORRESPONDENCES.)

The white magician of the past, like the psychiatrist of today, was basically a healer, and the complaints treated and the methods used were similar: whether we attribute our ills to devils or neuroses, the result is anxiety – and 'where anxiety exists, measures will always be taken to allay it'

WHITE MAGIC

DESCRIBED as an 'ancestral science' and also as 'the art of compulsion of the supernatural', magic is in practice a human technique designed to control the environment. It is based on the belief that the forces of Nature can be recruited to serve man's interests. In many primitive societies the control of these forces was one of the most important functions of priesthood, and it is only comparatively recently that magic has become divorced from religion.

The battle between good and evil or light and darkness, between white magic and black, may have existed only in the imagination, but it has always been conducted by dedicated individuals who were assumed to have access to psychic powers. The practitioner of white magic may have been a priest, magician or psychically endowed layman, but he always insisted that his supernatural operations were dedicated to the service of man, a claim that led to a great deal of contention. Both priests and magicians tend to insist that they and they alone have the qualifications to perform their vital role. This is why the clergy so often attacked magicians as agents of the Devil.

Magic has its positive and negative aspects, its active and passive principles. Similarly, magical practitioners may be divided into two basic personality types. One is the seeker after power, who strives to overcome his personal deficiencies by dominating others. The other is the seeker after wisdom who, driven by the same unconscious impulses, attempts to find the key to the hidden treasures of truth. The white magician, traditionally, calls upon God, angels and elemental spirits to supply the power he needs for his operations. The black magician is supposed to derive his particular powers from devils, and to have ghouls and other night monsters as his agents. Black magic should not be written off for it can implant a degree of terror in a victim that may seriously harm him (see CURSE).

The history of the conflict between black magic and white suggests that in the main it is not the highly specialized magician who is held responsible for psychic attacks, but ordinary individuals, usually neighbours, who are thought to have the Evil Eye (see EYE) or 'evil mouth', and to be involuntary agents of evil. Among people who believe in bewitchment, the fear of being caught by it, unprotected, is ever present; drowsiness, for example, is supposed to be a vulnerable state which must be avoided at all costs unless one has taken steps to protect oneself by white magic, such as by wearing an amulet. The gospel of St John hung on a cord around the neck was thought to be effective for this purpose, as was the Lord's Prayer inscribed on a piece of paper and kept in one's shoe. The charm bracelet, which has become universally popular as a luck-bringer since its introduction about 100 years ago, is probably the last of the traditional protective devices, but many people observe eccentric rites to which the resort when agitated. An unexpecte example which I came across recently wa the wearing of a violin 'D' string around th waist in order to benefit from its favourabl vibrations. In the past, whenever persona systems of protection failed to put the min at ease, a white magician was called in, i much the same way that a psychiatrist i consulted today.

In the country the white magician use to be a kind of general practitioner, th village Cunning Man or conjuror, while hi urban counterpart, particularly in the uppe ranks of society, tended to specialize in on particular art, such as astrology. In fact, th role of white magician will always remai important in a community that fears magi or in one that has been convinced by it clergy of the presence of devils.

Doctor, Vet and Detective

It is not generally realized that in its heyda white magic involved a wide variety o socially useful activities which are not readil associated with sorcery. The country magician was likely also to be the local veterinar surgeon, treating sick animals with a combination of muttered spells and a soun knowledge of animal diseases. The name o God was frequently on his lips when h supplied his human patients with simples o ointments, or exorcized their ghosts an devils. When cross-examining someon who had asked him to divine the whereabouts of a lost object, he would combin incantations with painstaking interrogation. The white magician's status was sustained by the awe with which he wa regarded in his community and, unless h was driven underground by persecution, h survived for just as long as people had nee of his services, and while they accepted hi peculiar version of reality.

An inveterate enemy of the clergy, whom

Spectrum Colour Library

Corn dolly in Wales; made from the last shea of the harvest, which was thought to contai the spirit of the corn, dollies were kept until the beginning of the next season's ploughing to ensure continuity; this old custom which was widespread throughout Europe reflects the belief, a basic concept of magic that the forces of Nature can be controlled an used for the benefit of man

e tended to regard as presumptuous inter- ppers, the white wizard in Europe assumed semi-divine authority, comparable with hat of the African witch-doctor. This might e conferred upon him during his initiation, r it might be based upon some unusual ircumstance of birth – in England, for nstance, he might be the seventh son of a eventh son – or on an inherited power.

In medieval Germany and 19th century orth America the charmer whispered or ang his patient back to health. At Castel- nellano in southern Italy, a small village hich is regarded as a centre of witchcraft y people for many miles around, the *aciara* or sorceress treats her emotionally isturbed clients by tying knots in a length of tring which is buried in a cemetery at the onclusion of the ceremony. The spirit of vil is destroyed by this ritual 'killing'. In 9th century England a wizard of Amer- ham in Buckinghamshire was reputed to ave cured a sick child by instructing its arents to 'take the length of the child with a tick, measure so much ground in the hurch-yard, and there dig and bury the tick'.

The Spanish village of Mojacar, famous r its witches, was the home of a celebrated lmerian wise woman Tia Carrica, until bout 20 years ago. She achieved some emarkable cures by tracing a cross with a nger on the foreheads of sick clients. She ould then enter into a trance state during he course of which the sickness passed from er client's body into her own. She often ecited the following spell over individuals uffering from the Evil Eye:

Three have done evil to you.
Three have to be taken away.
Who are the three persons of the Holy
  Trinity?
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Shepherd who came to the fountain
And came from the fountain,
Take away the Evil Eye
From whom you put it on.

The white magician in medieval England onfronted with the same type of case used very similar technique and recited:

Three biters hast thou bitten
The hart, ill eye, ill tongue.
Three biters shall be thy Boote,
Father, Sonne and Holy Ghost or God's
  name.
In worship of the five wounds of our
  Lorde.

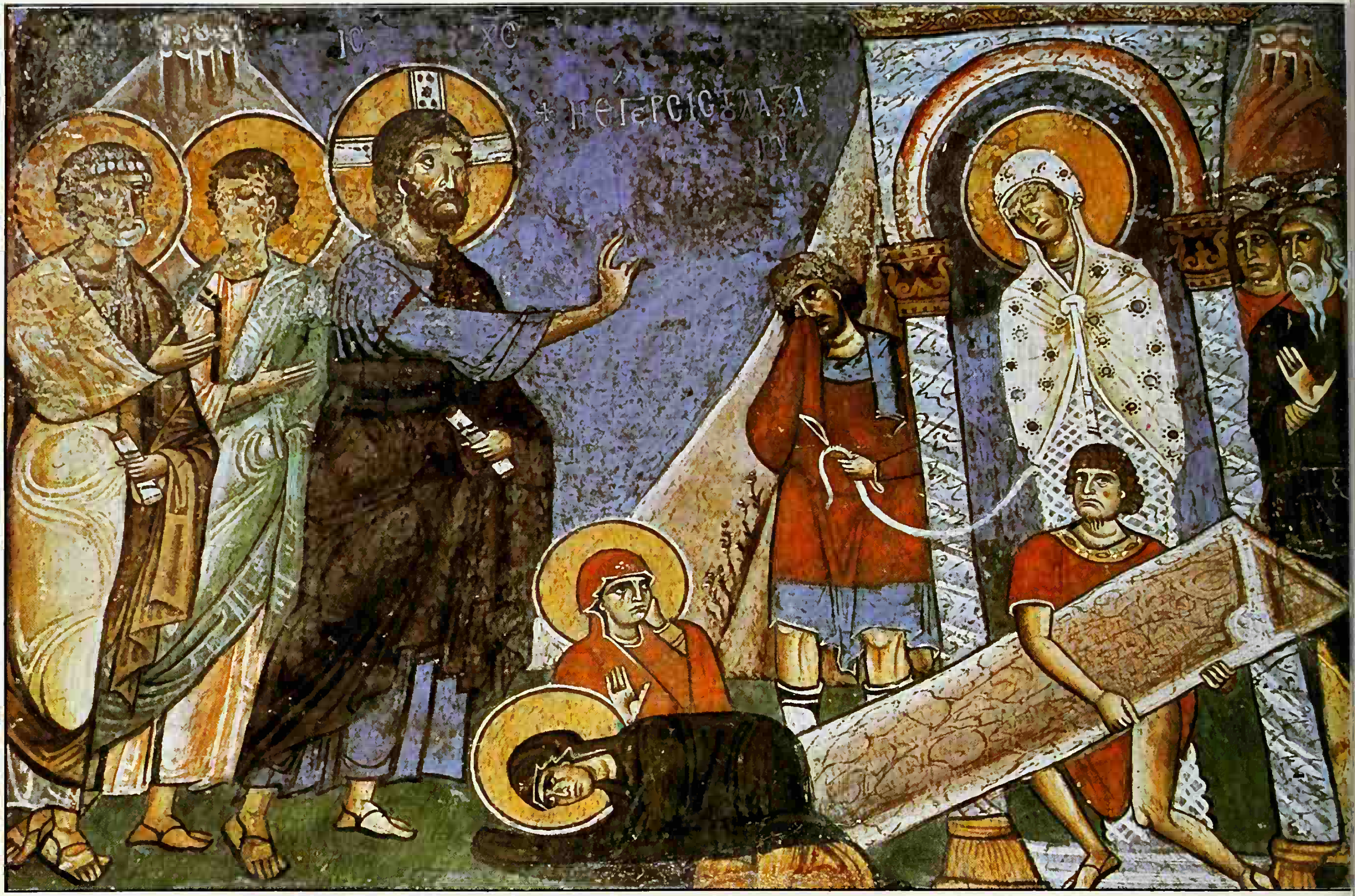
Magic as a force can probably best be efined as the interaction of one mind upon nother, with suggestion as its primary nechanism; psychic power is nothing more or less than a peculiarly effective type of hinking. In Africa the witch-doctor is elieved to possess an indwelling power which enables him not only to heal the sick ut also to identify witches in the com- munity (see FINDING OF WITCHES). This onsciousness of an inner force is common o most psychic healers and white magi- cians, and they usually believe that it can be reserved only if they observe an extremely trict code of conduct. If the witch-doctor ubmits to the temptation to practise magic for illicit ends his power will leave him, or he will become a witch himself.

TORTU
GRAND CHANTIER
ST JOSEPH
FONDE EN 1919
C.D.J P.P.N
PASTON MACON
1969 FILS
Tortu
M.S.N 1965
1968
1967
14 MAY 1969
JASON
Colorific

Charms, amulets and talismans of various kinds play their part in white magic: in Mauritius fishermen attached images of fish to a tree; a form of imitative magic, this is thought to ensure a plentiful supply of fish

English folklorists report a similar moral code among the Cunning Men of the past (see EAST ANGLIAN AND ESSEX WITCHES). It seems that they always refused to work for reward since they believed that this would result in a subconscious pandering to the client's wishes, and that they would tell him what he wanted to hear rather than what he needed to know. Such insight, though rare, is not uncommon among white magicians.

The practitioner of white magic is compelled to be rigidly disciplined in his attitudes to day-to-day affairs, as he may otherwise fall from grace and his spells may fail to work. This leads to a permanent state of tension, which is in itself a sign of instability, a measure of the emotional disturbance common to 'possessed' people (see POSSESSION). It is a widely-held view today that the witches of the past were often people who would nowadays be classed as suffering from some form of mental illness (see HYSTERICAL POSSESSION; OLD AGE; WITCHCRAFT), and the same could be said of witch-doctors. The Siberian shaman became frenzied as he entered the trance state (see SHAMAN), and it is well known that many white magicians have been emotionally disturbed.



Whether the practitioner of white magic was a priest, magician or psychically endowed layman, he always insisted that his supernatural powers were dedicated to the service of man; the most important of his roles was that of healer, in emulation of Jesus whose aid he often called upon when carrying out his healing operations: *Jesus Raising Lazarus from the Dead,* wall painting in Cyprus

The social value of the white magician was to some extent counterbalanced by the dangers inherent in his methods of treatment. In his extremely informative book *Scared to Death*, Dr J. C. Barker devotes considerable attention to this problem. There are cases in which fortune tellers have implanted troublesome thoughts and eroding fears in the minds of clients, with disastrous results. It is a curious situation when the sick are treated by the sick, and when the rustic psychiatrist who sets up shop to abreact the community's traumas could be said to be in need of treatment himself.

Another aspect of witch-doctor practice, and one which led to many tragedies, was the hunting down and execution of so-called black witches at the instigation of white ones. Isolated examples have occurred in the 20th century. Some 40 years ago, for instance, the Pow Wow men of Pennsylvania were indirectly responsible for the murders of a number of innocent victims of popular prejudice. More recently similar cases have been reported from West Germany, where the belief in magic is today, if anything, even stronger than in pre-war years.

Aura of Responsibility

Although the definitive history of white magic in the British Isles has yet to be written, it is clear that much of it is of Germanic origin. The white magicians and healers of Anglo-Saxon times treated their patients with a combination of prayer, magical incantations and herbal medicines, based on the Doctrine of Signatures, the principle that 'like cures like' (see DISEASE). They healed by touch, breath, and suggestion, and this in their day was probably the best type of medicine available. Medieval healing charms were often supplemented by a type of amulet that goes back to prehistoric times, and which is still used today to bring luck. This is the flint arrowhead or the holed stone, sometimes called a fairy stone, which protected both the byre and the bedroom from demonic attacks. The consecration of a fairy stone was an elaborate affair, and included the following incantation:

> I conjure thee, by all Hosts of Heaven,
> By the Living God, the True God,
> By the Blessed and Omnipotent God . . .

At the conclusion of the ceremony the magician cried out: 'May it protect you against all evil forces and curses, Amen.'

Such a blasphemous combination of paganism and Christianity was a constant affront to many Christians and gave offence to the ecclesiastical authorities, but there seems to have been very little they could do about it. Basically there appears to have been little difference between the magicians' claims that sickness was the work of evi spirits, and the Church's belief that Sata was responsible.

White magic was apparently sanctioned if not sanctified, because it was sociall necessary. Given the choice between th faith healing of the Church and that of th more skilful wizard, the outcome wa generally predictable. Love magic (se LOVE MAGIC), a primitive type of marriag guidance, was in constant demand by al classes in spite of the fulminations of th bishops. Geomancy and many other divinatory arts had the same meaning for medieva man as the newspaper astrologer has for hi 20th century counterpart. Where anxiet exists, measures will always be taken t allay it. The law of supply and deman applies to every type of human need.

The white magician of medieval days competed successfully with the clergy for th exorcism of ghosts and devils, transferre the evils of sickness from the living suffere to inanimate objects which were then rituall buried, and at the same time maintained hi aura of respectability by insisting that God Christ and the 12 Apostles were on his side This is probably the reason why Englis white magicians were allowed to operat relatively unimpeded.

From a study of modern white magic i is possible to reconstruct some of the techniques used by healers until well into th 19th century. Magic circles with cabalisti symbols were drawn in order to conjure u what would now be described as psychi energy. Modern witches call this proces eating the 'cone of power', and insist that be directed to social ends. A variety of pells were used to combat black witch- raft, the most remarkable being the witch ottle (see BLOOD; IRON; MURRELL), which as used when the identity of a witch was nknown to her victim. A bottle which was ften made of glass but sometimes of welded on, and which contained blood, hair, nail arings, urine and excreta from the bewitched erson, was heated on the hearth fire at mid- ight; at the same time the assembled ompany intoned the Lord's Prayer back- ards. The witch was presumed to be under- oing excruciating agonies while the contents the bottle boiled, with all the blood in her ody afire, and this pain continued until she ad removed her spell. If the bottle exploded he was expected to die. Witch bottles are ot unknown, even today. It is possible that few hysterics may have been cured by this izarre rite, but it is doubtful that it could ave had much effect upon organic diseases.

rom White Magic to Black Box

he state's attitude towards semi-heretical agicians began to harden after the Refor- ation, despite the sympathy directed owards white magicians by the community enerally. A few eminent European jurists, ich as Paulus Grillandus, a 16th century riter on witchcraft who was a papal judge the witch trials in Rome, were even pre- ared to tolerate white magic, at a time hen witches generally were being persecu- d, provided it was socially useful. How- ver, strict adherence to the law of God, articularly to the command in Exodus 2.18, which is translated in the Authorised ersion of the Bible as 'Thou shalt not uffer a witch to live', made it imperative hat every kind of witch should be eliminated. he Bible also decreed that 'There shall not e found among you anyone who . . . prac- ises divination, or a soothsayer, or an ugur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a edium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For hoever does these things is an abomination the Lord' (Deuteronomy 18.10-12).

Religious purists instituted witch-hunts eliminate both black and white sorcerers. he Scots tortured and burned both classes ndiscriminately, but elsewhere in the ritish Isles white magicians were awarded inor punishments unless it could be proved hat they were heretics. These prosecutions ere at their fiercest during the reign of ueen Elizabeth I, and gradually died down uring the following century. As late as 1651 ohn Lock of Colchester was placed in the illory for setting up as a diviner of lost nd stolen property, and many other white agicians were sent to prison. Jane Wen- am, the last woman in England to be found uilty of witchcraft, who was tried and ardoned in 1712, was a former white magi- ian whose clientele had turned against her.

Although the Witchcraft Act of 1735 bolished the death penalty for witchcraft, ractitioners of white magic were theoretic- lly liable to be put in the pillory and sent to rison. However, there is no evidence that gal proceedings were ever taken against hite magicians.

The traditional type of white magic is still dispensed in the Channel Islands by bone-setters and healers, who often claim to be seventh sons of seventh sons. On the mainland the older type of magician had almost disappeared by the beginning of the 20th century, although a report published by the British Medical Association just before the First World War revealed that a few healing witches still survived in remote places.

Today the successors of the white magician may be found in the sphere of unorthodox or 'fringe' medicine. The 'Black Box', for instance (see RADIESTHESIA), which it is claimed can diagnose disease in the absence of the patient, so that it can be treated on homoeopathic principles going back to Paracelsus, has become a vogue in the present century; and there are even radionic instruments which are said to be able to 'broadcast' treatment from a distance. Healing by the laying on of hands – by ordinary men and women rather than priests – is as popular today as it was in the Middle Ages. Astrologers and diviners of every kind dispense their psychic powers in cities and towns, while in the countryside wart charmers and rustic healers have their following. Yet another manifestation of white magic in Britain is in the form of witch covens which flourish in some cities (see MODERN WITCHCRAFT). Modern witches insist that they are the only true heirs of the old magical healers. Needless to say, the Church looks on their activities with a jaundiced eye.

There is a certain similarity between the methods used by modern psychiatrists and those of the old magicians, and in recent years psychiatry has begun to examine sympathetically the functions of witch-doctors, medicine-men and shamans. If white magic may be defined as the power of the imagination to effect changes in mental states by helping the sufferer to relive his past experiences, and by this means externalize his problems and reduce them to manageable proportions, the comparison becomes obvious.

The Evil Eye may have ceased to trouble civilized man, but the 'evil mouth' in the shape of adverse news continues to assault his peace of mind and to require the ministrations of the healer. Although white magic can have no effect on the objective world, it profoundly influences the way in which it is seen. In an age of anxiety the white magician in one form or another can still perform a useful role; for this reason, white magic is likely to be with us for the foreseeable future.

ERIC MAPLE

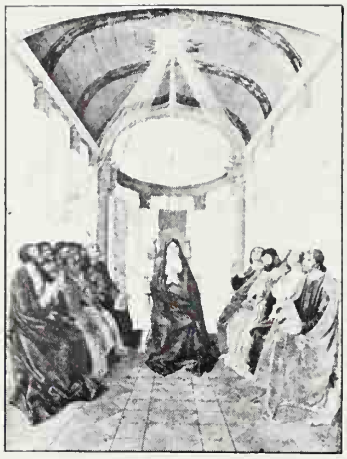
FURTHER READING: G. Knight, *A History of White Magic* (Mowbrays, 1978); David G. Phillips, *White Magic* (Scholarly, 1981); E. Maple, *Magic, Medicine and Quackery* (A. S. Barnes, 1968).

Tibetan exorcizing dagger: the belief that sickness is the work of evil spirits is found in many cultures; in England the white magician competed successfully with the clergy for the exorcism of ghosts and devils, and maintained his aura of respectability, at the same time, by insisting that God, Christ and the 12 Apostles were on his side

Victoria & Albert Museum

Whitsun

The season of Pentecost, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit to the apostles of Jesus (Acts, chapter 2): Whit Sunday is literally 'white Sunday', probably because newly baptized Christians wore white robes on that day; still a holiday season in Britain, it used to be celebrated with feasting, games and processions.
See PENTECOSTALIST MOVEMENT; SPEAKING IN TONGUES.



Widdershins

Or withershins, the direction contrary to the sun's apparent course, to the left, or anticlockwise; deliberate movement in this direction is sinister, associated with witches and worshippers of the Devil, because it reverses the normal and proper order of things.

Men fled to their homes when they heard the Wild Hunt approaching and took care not to look out of their windows; the leader was sometimes said to be the Devil, and his hounds were demon dogs, or the spirits of unbaptized children

WILD HUNT

A TERRIFYING BAND of spectral riders and hounds led by some divine, or demonic, or ghostly leader, the Wild Hunt could be heard on dark and stormy nights of midwinter (and sometimes at other seasons also), rushing through the air with a great clamour of shouts and horn-blowing and the baying of hounds.

Belief in its existence was at one time widespread all over northern Europe, Germany, France, and Great Britain, and traces of that belief are still to be found in the folk traditions of all these lands. It has been known by various names in various regions: the Yule Host in Iceland, the Raging or Furious Host in Germany, the *Chasse Maccabei*, or *Chasse Artu*, or *Mesnie Hellequin* in different parts of France, and numerous others elsewhere. In the West of England, it was the Yeth Hounds or Wish Hounds, in Durham and north Yorkshire the Gabriel Hounds or Gabble Ratchets. This last name literally means 'corpse hounds', from the medieval *gabares*, a corpse, and *rache*, a hound that hunts by scent and gives tongue. In some north-country dialects, it is also a term used for night-flying wild geese, whose cries, heard in darkness, so strikingly suggest the noise of an invisible pack of hounds passing far overhead.

It was commonly believed that to see the Wild Hunt as it swept by was dangerous. Men fled to their homes when they heard it approaching and took care not to look out of their windows. One version of the legend says that any person who could not find shelter in time was liable to be seized, carried away over long distances, and finally abandoned in some unknown region far from his home. He could save himself only by falling face downwards on the ground so that he could see nothing, and holding fast to any available plant or tuft of grass until the dark company had passed. To look deliberately at the riders, or to speak to their leader, was to court instant death or madness, or at best, some dreadful personal misfortune.

Odin, god of the dead, or Woden, his Germanic counterpart (see GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY; ODIN), is generally thought to have been the original leader of the Wild Hunt. Later on, when Christianity had dimmed the memory of the ancient deities in the minds of men, his place was often filled by the Devil. He too rode with a great company who were sometimes fiends like himself and sometimes the souls of the lost dead. His hounds were demon dogs, or the spirits of unbaptized children. The unnamed spectral huntsman who is sometimes encountered on Dartmoor and in other lonely places, riding without followers but with a pack of jet-black hounds, is almost certainly a direct descendant of the Devil as leader of the Wild Hunt. So also is the anonymous being who, in later legends, drives a sinister black coach in which the souls of dying sinners are fetched from the death chamber and driven away to hell.

The Night Hounds

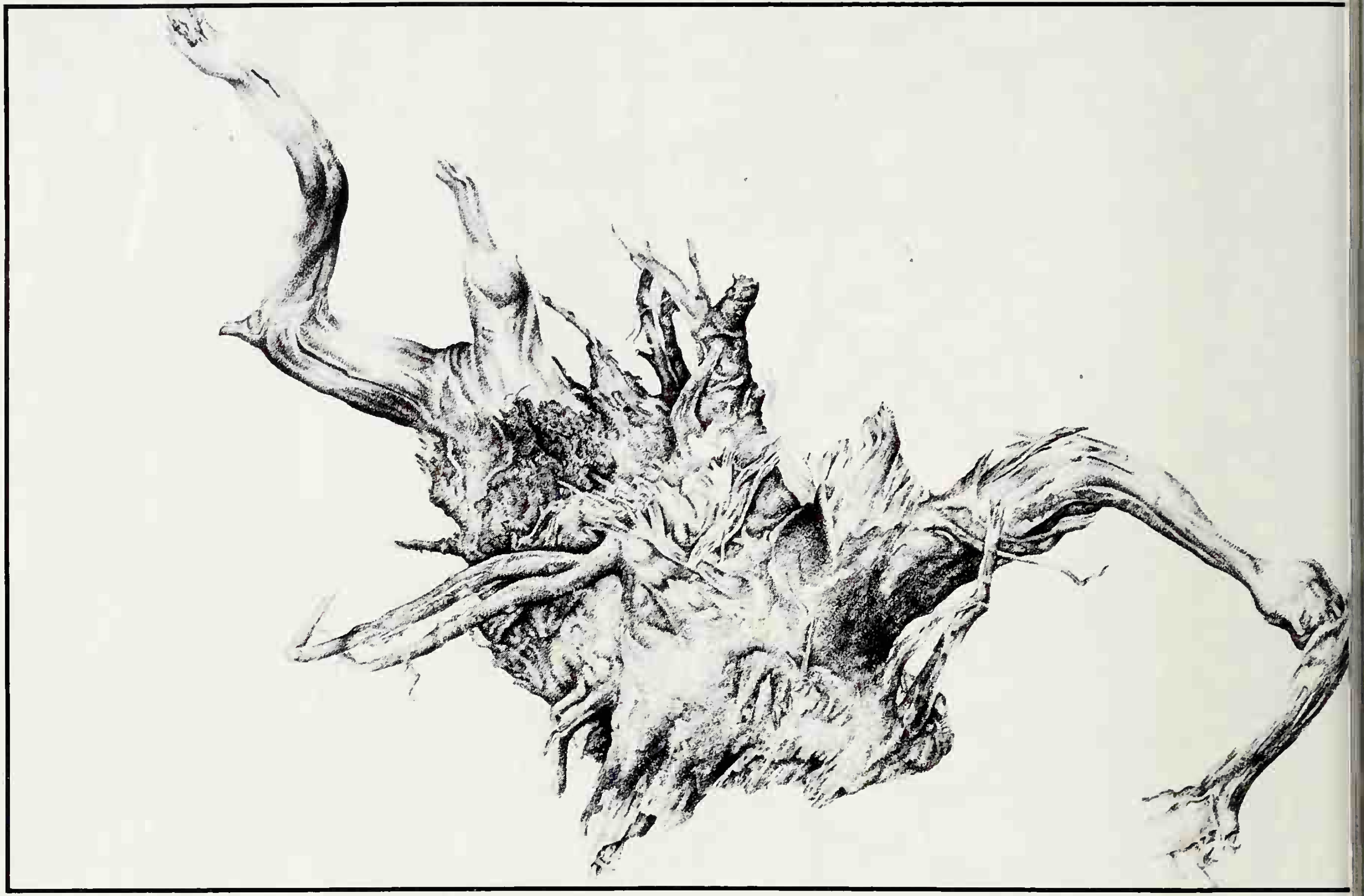
In the Middle Ages, the leader was frequently neither god nor devil, but some human individual of heroic stature, renowned, locally or nationally, for the splendour of his former deeds or, quite as often, for the magnitude of his sins or his misfortunes. Dietrich von Bern (the legendary name of Theodoric the Great) was one of these; so was Charlemagne, and King Wenzel (or Wenceslas) of Bohemia, and Duke Abel, the fratricide. In one district of France, it was Hugh Capet, King of France in the 10th century, who led the host, in another, King Herod, the murderer of the Innocents. Gervase of Tilbury, writing in the 13th century, refers to a belief that Arthur hunted in the forests of England and Brittany, and that companies of his knights, with their hounds, had been seen there by foresters, at midday, or on nights of the full moon. At Cadbury Fort in Somerset (see CAMELOT), which is one of the places where Arthur is said to abide until the day when he will come again, local tradition asserts that he and his men rode round the hill when the moon was full, and watered their horses at a nearby spring. So too, on wild winter nights, he went hunting down an ancient trackway running from Cadbury towards
Glastonbury, which is still known as Kin
Arthur's Causeway. No one saw him ther
but those who lived near the old track some
times heard his hounds and his horses rush
ing by in the windy darkness.

In Shropshire, Wild Edric, the resis
tance hero who held out against Willia
the Conqueror for nearly three years an
was never defeated or captured, appeare
before a war, riding furiously with hi
followers in the direction of the enem
country. Whoever encountered them had t
cover his eyes immediately and keep siler
until the cavalcade had passed. If he faile
to do so, he would be smitten with madnes
A rather uncertain tradition says that S
Francis Drake used to drive over Dartmo
in a black coach, drawn by headless horse
and followed by a pack of hounds whos
baying killed every earthly dog that heard i
In this late tale we see a transitional stag
between the ancient Wild Hunt and th
spectral coach which eventually took i
place in folk tradition. Here is the huma
leader who was once a god, and here are th
hounds; but the hero does not ride, and th
perils of his passage fall, not upon men, bu
upon dogs.

A faint memory of the legend lingere
until fairly recently in the Meon Hills
south Warwickshire. On Christmas Eve an
New Year's Eve, a solitary huntsman wa
often seen with a pack of hounds whos
cries could be heard a long way off, and wh
were locally known as Hell Hounds, or Nigh
Hounds, or Hooter. No one knew who h
was; some said he was a master of foxhound
who hunted on the Sabbath and was conse
quently condemned to hunt until the Day
Judgement. Others said he was a man wh
had been torn to pieces by his own hound
In one version of the tale he hunted a pha
tom fox through the countryside; but i
another, he rode quietly with his hound
round him, as though returning from a day
sport. If he encountered any night wayfare
he often asked the man to open a gate f
him, or do some other little thing that
horseman might reasonably ask of a man o
foot. But to grant these requests was da
gerous. Whoever did so ran the risk, lik
his pagan ancestor long ago, of bein
suddenly swept away, not to be seen again i
his home for a very long time, and perhap
never.

CHRISTINA HOL

WILDWOOD



Previous page The forest of legend and foll lore is a strange and eerie place, an othe world of unearthly and potentially dangerou beings; in modern interpretations it frequently taken as a symbol of the dar tangled depths of the mind ***Above*** 'The uncann quality of woods is part of the lore of childhood and in the forest trees put out roots to tri you and reach out for you with crooke skinny fingers: ***Jo's Wild Wood,*** a drawin by Anne Said

The forest of legend and folklore is often strange and eerie, an otherworld, the realm of Nature untamed by man, of unearthly and potentially dangerous beings

THE MOLE, in Kenneth Grahame's children's classic *The Wind in the Willows*, set off by himself one winter's day to explore the Wild Wood. It stretched before him 'low and threatening, like a black reef in some still southern sea', and once inside it he became increasingly uneasy. Growths of fungus on tree stumps looked like faces, and he thought he saw faces watching him from the holes in the banks. Nervously plunging away into the trackless depths of the wood, he heard a faint shrill whistling sound that came first from one direction, then another. There was the rustling patter of feet. 'The whole wood seemed running now, running hard, hunting, chasing, closing in round something or – somebody?'

Suddenly the Mole was in a panic, running aimlessly to and fro, bumping into things, falling over things, dodging round things, until he took refuge in the dark hollow of an old beech tree, where he covered himself with leaves and hoped he was safe. The Rat, who came to his rescue, told him that no one should walk in the Wild Wood without protection: 'I mean passwords, and signs, and sayings which have power and effect, and plants you carry in your pocket, and verses you repeat and tricks you practise.'

The uncanny quality of woods is part of the lore of childhood. In the forest you are far from home, from fireside warmth and kindliness and the settled accustomed order of things. In the forest you are lost. In the forest the trees put out roots to trip you, and reach out for you with crooked, skinny fingers. In the forest, very often, lives the witch. In the story of Hansel and Gretel, for instance, the two children are abandoned in the woods, where they become hopelessly lost. They find a little house made of gingerbread and sugar, and break off pieces of it to eat, but it is a treacherous sanctuary, for it belongs to a cannibal witch, who puts Hansel in a cage to fatten him up for cooking.

In another, peculiarly nasty, German fairy tale a little girl goes to the house of Frau Trude in the forest. She looks in through the window and sees no sign of Frau Trude, but she does see the Devil with a fiery head. When she tells Frau Trude this, the latter says, 'Oho, then you have seen the witch in her true colours: I have been waiting for you for years, longing for you to shine for me.' She turns the little girl into a block of wood and throws her on the fire. 'And when she was in full flame, Frau Trude sat down beside the blaze, warmed herself and said, "Now at last it shines bright."'

There is another highly disagreeable forest witch in Russian folklore, Baba Yaga, an ogress who cooks and eats small children. She lives in a hut, surrounded by a fence topped with skulls, in a clearing in the woods, and the hut spins round and round on chickens' legs. She is evidently an incarnation of wild Nature, for she guards the fountain of the water of life, her teeth are stone, she rides through the air in an iro kettle to stir up storms, and she is serve by three horsemen, a bright one, a red or and a dark one, who are her day, her su and her night.

Forest Primeval

Groves and woods have many symbolic cor notations and are by no means alway places of evil (see TREES). They may be place of retreat from the bustle of th noisy human world to the peace of Natur or the scene of amorous dalliance away fro the neighbours' eyes, or the arena of th hunting of boar or stag. The forest of legen and folklore is not always what Edgar Alla Poe characteristically called 'ghoul-haunte woodland', but it does tend to be strange an eerie. It is an otherworld, the realm of Natur untamed by man, of unearthly and potentially dangerous beings. In modern interpretations it is frequently taken as a symbol c the dark depths of the mind, the wild an tangled growths of the unconscious.

In the forest you are lost. In the forest the trees put out roots to trip you up, and reach out for you with crooked, skinny fingers. In the forest, very often, lives the witch

In the *Odyssey*, the house of Circe, the nchantress (see CIRCE), is in a forest learing. Dante's *Inferno* begins in a gloomy wood and in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* a wood is the setting for Oberon, Titania, Puck and the fairies. There is an old uneasy saying that 'woods ave ears', and when we are still caught n some entangling thicket of difficulties we say we are not yet out of the wood.

One strand in the theme of the wildwood is the feeling of its immense antiquity, the forest primeval' of Longfellow's famous nes in *Evangeline*, where the murmuring ines and the hemlocks 'stand like Druids of ld'. The Druids worshipped in woodland anctuaries (see DRUIDS), and the Celtic nd Germanic reverence for sacred trees nd groves contributes to the haunted, uminous quality attributed to woods in orthern Europe.

Another strand is the terror that the trees might move. In a frightening passage early in . R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* the eroes traverse the Old Forest, where the rees do not like strangers. At night they eem to be whispering to each other, passing ews and plots along in an unintelligible anguage, and the branches sway and grope ven when there is no wind. 'They do say he trees do actually move, and can surround trangers and hem them in.' One of the hobbits is trapped by a great grey willow tree, nd Old Man Willow has an old and pecuarly sinister reputation among trees, as oes the elder (see ELDER; WILLOW). Oak oppices, where the trees have been felled, re also dangerous places in which to walk t night, for the stumps hunger for revenge nd swiftly grow new shoots which reach ut for passers-by.

The Questing Beast

n Arthurian legend, the wild forest is requently the scene of enchantments and ncounters with supernatural beings and wonders, or the way to these beings and wonders lies through the forest. The Forest Perilous, located in North Wales in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, was the home of an nchantress who lured King Arthur there o seduce him, and he would have died there f he had not been rescued by Sir Tristram. t was deep in a forest that Arthur saw the Questing Beast, a most extraordinary reature (with which T. H. White had great fun in *The Once and Future King*). It had the head of a serpent, the body of a leopard, a lion's hindquarters and the feet of a stag, and from its belly came the noise of 30 couple of hounds baying.

In *Perlesvaus*, a French romance of the 13th century, the Questing Beast is a white animal which has 12 barking hounds in her womb. When she gives birth to these hounds, they tear her to pieces but cannot eat her flesh. The author explains that the beast is a figure of Christ and the hounds are the Jews, who sacrificed Christ but cannot consume his body in the sacrament of the Mass.

In the *Didot Perceval*, of the same period, a young knight enters the land of Avalon and in an enchanted forest meets a beautiful maiden sitting by a fountain. They wander lovingly through the woodland till they come to a green meadow where the knight becomes unaccountably drowsy. He falls asleep, and when he wakes up finds himself the maiden's prisoner in an invisible castle. A similar story was told of Merlin, who was tricked and made prisoner by an enchantress (see MERLIN), a scene sometimes set in the Forest Perilous.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (see GAWAIN) describes how the hero, riding north to seek out the Green Knight, travels through the Wilderness of Wirral, on the borders of Cheshire and Lancashire, which in the 14th century was so infested with dangerous outlaws and outcasts that in 1376, at the request of the citizens of Chester, Edward III ordered it to be deforested. Pressing on through unknown country, he fights dragons to the death and battles with wolves, woodwouses (wild men of the woods), bulls, bears, boars, and ogres on the high fells. Cleaving his way through all these perils, he reaches 'a wondrously wild wood', a forest of oak, hazel and hawthorn (all of them magical trees), and when he comes to the Green Knight's castle he sees it shimmering through the oaks which hem it in.

Among his other adventures, Gawain reached the hall of the Grail after riding through a forest, and the causeway which led to the hall was roofed by trees which grew on either side, making it dark and eerie. Another Grail hero, Perceval (see GRAIL; PARSIFAL), was brought up in the forested wilds of Wales. Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz (in *The Grail Legend*) see in this an image of both the mother and the unconscious. The forest in which Perceval grows up is Nature in her maternal role as nourisher and protector, and: 'with its plant and animal life, its twilight and its restricted horizon, the forest aptly illustrates the as yet barely conscious condition of the child . . .' They also suggest that in general when the forest is the starting point of a hero's adventures, it 'represents the emergence from a relatively unconscious situation into a far more conscious one'.

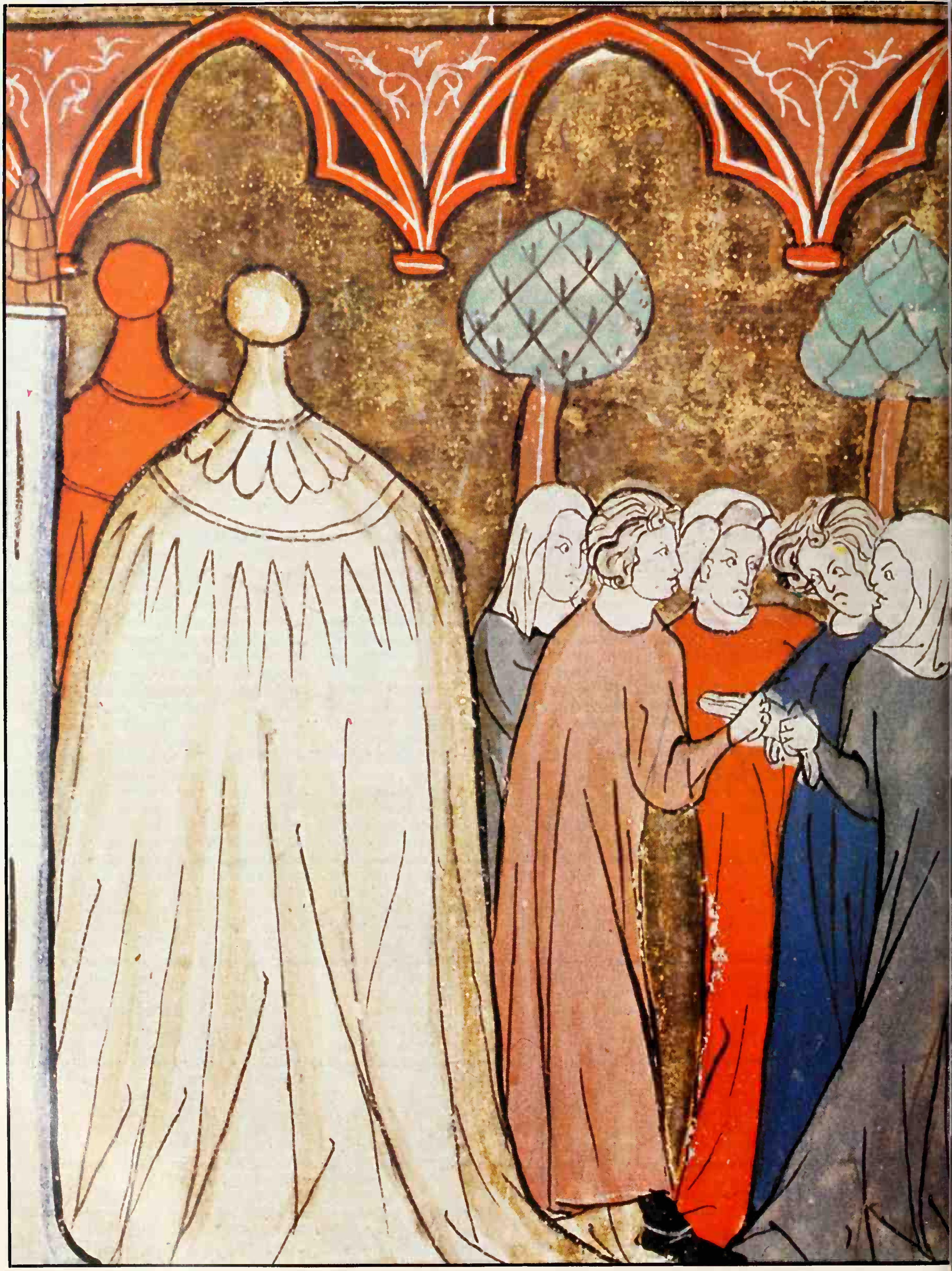
The Wild Man

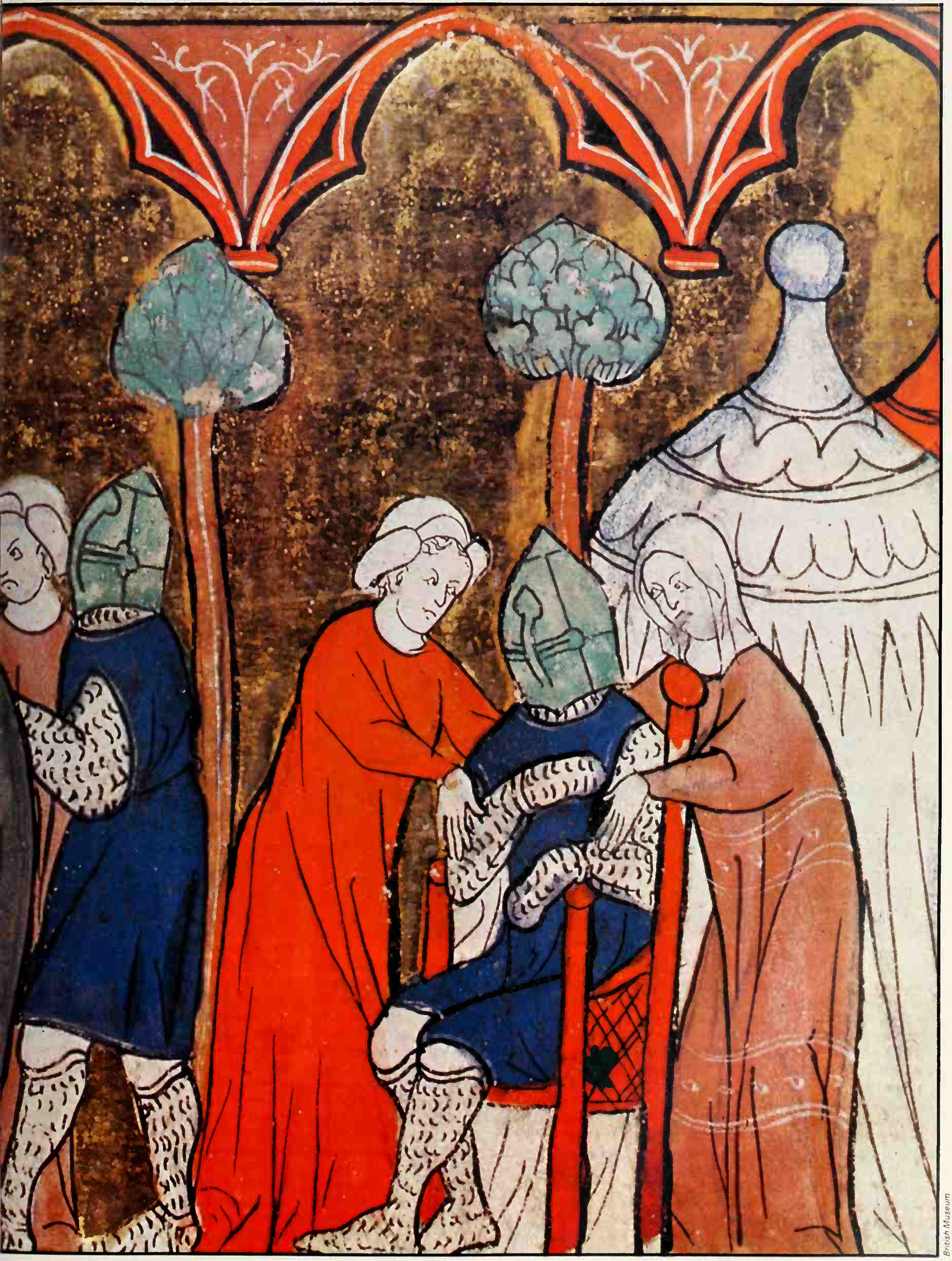
One of the alarming creatures to be found in the forest of legend, and in the old days in the forest of reality, is a woodwouse (spelt in various ways, including woodwose and woodhouse), a wild man of the woods. Perceval is something of a wild man himself, in the sense of a 'natural man' or 'noble savage', brought up close to Nature and far from civilization, so ignorant of the ways of the world that when he first sees mailed knights of Arthur's court he takes them for angels.

A more orthodox woodwouse, is the hero of *Sir Orfeo*, a medieval English poem based on the Greek legend of Orpheus, the great singer (see ORPHEUS). Sir Orfeo takes to the forest when his beloved wife is snatched away by the fairies. In his desperate grief he decides never to look at a woman again but to go to the wilderness, to live with wild beasts in the ancient woods. There he sleeps on the ground, gathering fruit and berries in the summer and in the winter reduced to grubbing up roots and gnawing on grass and bark. He grows cruelly thin, his beard long and shaggy, but on bright clear days he plays his harp. All the beasts of the forest gather round and the birds cluster on the branches to hear the sweetness of his harping.

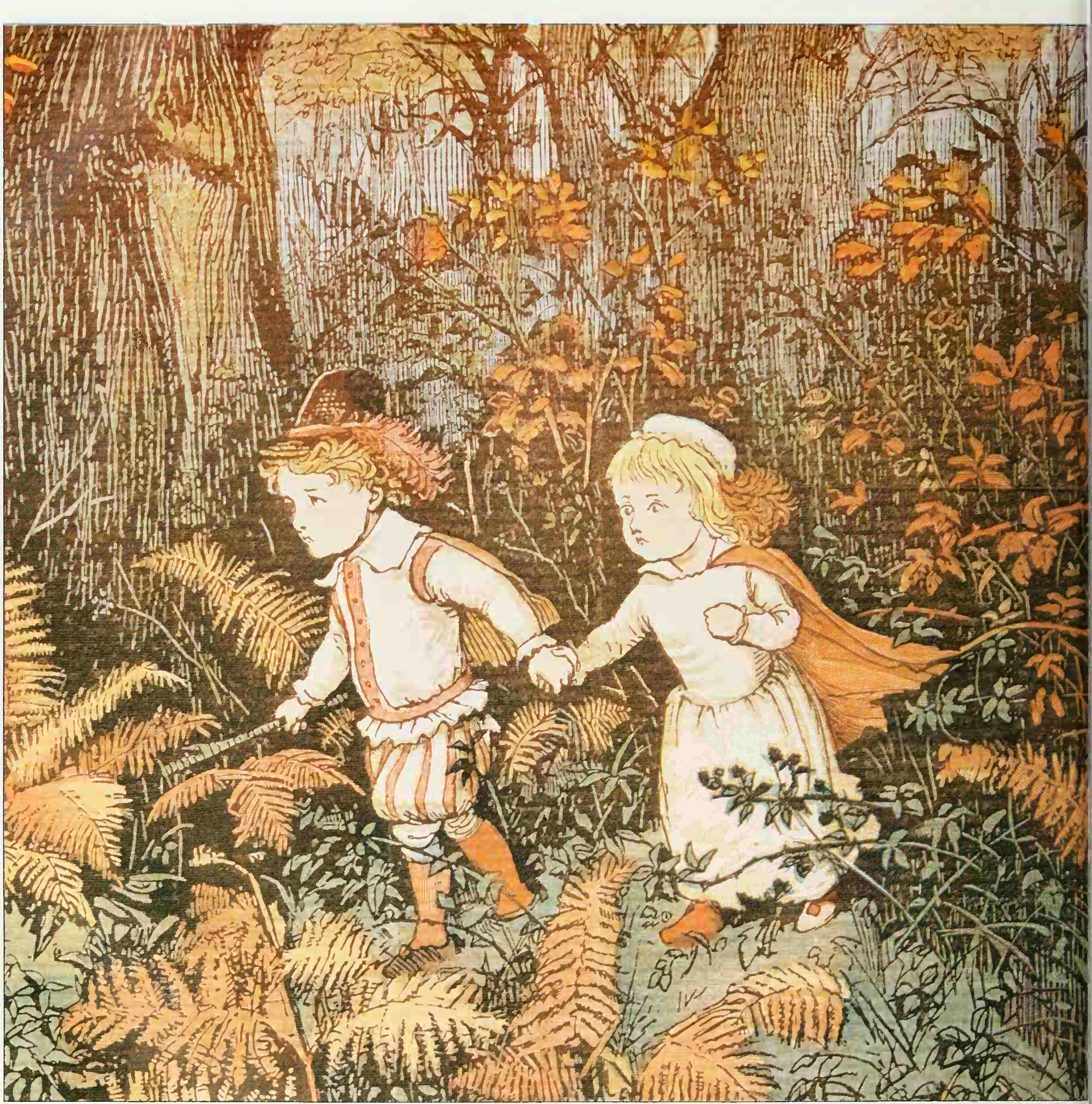
In the woods Sir Orfeo sees the King of Fairyland at his hunting, with the sounding of horns and baying of hounds. He sees armed fairy knights riding with swords drawn and banners unfurled, and knights and ladies dancing in the glades. One day he recognizes one of the ladies as his lost love and unlike his Greek original, is able to win her back.

It was said that Merlin had been driven mad and sent wandering through the woods as a punishment for causing war. There was a Scottish legend of a forest wild man, said to have been encountered by St Kentigern.





British Museum



He was naked and hairy, his name was Lailoken, and he had been punished for his sins by being made to live apart from humanity with only wild beasts for company: some said he was Merlin. In Irish legend, Suibne Gelt, King of Dal nAraide, was said to have gone mad after the battle of Moira in 673. He fled to the woods where, since he could fly like a bird, he spent much of his time roosting in the tops of trees.

The fact that the coat of arms of the Earls of Atholl in Scotland had a wild man in fetters as a supporter was explained by the story that a wild man had lived among the rocks at Craigiebarns, ravaging the countryside and terrifying everyone. After several attempts to catch him had failed, a man named Murray trapped him by filling the pool from which the wild man drank with Atholl brose – whisky and honey – and so putting him into a sound sleep. As a reward the Earl of Atholl gave Murray the hand of his daughter in marriage, and Murray eventually succeeded to the earldom. (In fact, the Murrays did succeed to the title through a marriage with the heiress of Atholl in the 17th century.)

A celebrated wild man of modern fiction is Ben Gunn, in *Treasure Island*. He has been marooned on the island and has survived there alone for three years, living on goats, berries and oysters, and wistfully longing for toasted cheese. Shaggy, black with sunburn, dressed in rags and tatters, he is almost as timid as an animal, desperately anxious for human company and

Previous page In Arthurian legend, the wil forest is frequently the scene of enchantments wonders and supernatural beings, or the wa to them is through the forest: Sir Lancelo in the enchanted forest, from a French 14t century MS

Above In its beneficent aspects the forest ha been described as representing Nature in he maternal role, nourishing and protecting, concept reflected in the story of the 'Babe in the Wood' in which two lost children ar fed and cared for by the animals of the forest *Babes in the Wood* by Ralph Caldecot

Far right Robin Hood, the most famous of al forest outlaws, feasting in the Greenwood: i the outlaw legends the forest is a place o refuge and freedom from the demands o conventional society

The Mole in the Wild Wood

There was nothing to alarm him at first entry. Twigs crackled under his feet, logs tripped him, funguses on stumps resembled caricatures, and startled him for a moment by their likeness to something familiar and far away; but that was all fun and exciting. It led him on, and he penetrated to where the light was less, and trees crouched nearer and nearer, and holes made ugly mouths at him on either side.

Everything was very still now. The dusk advanced on him steadily, rapidly, gathering in behind and before; and the light seemed to be draining away like flood-water.

Then the faces began.

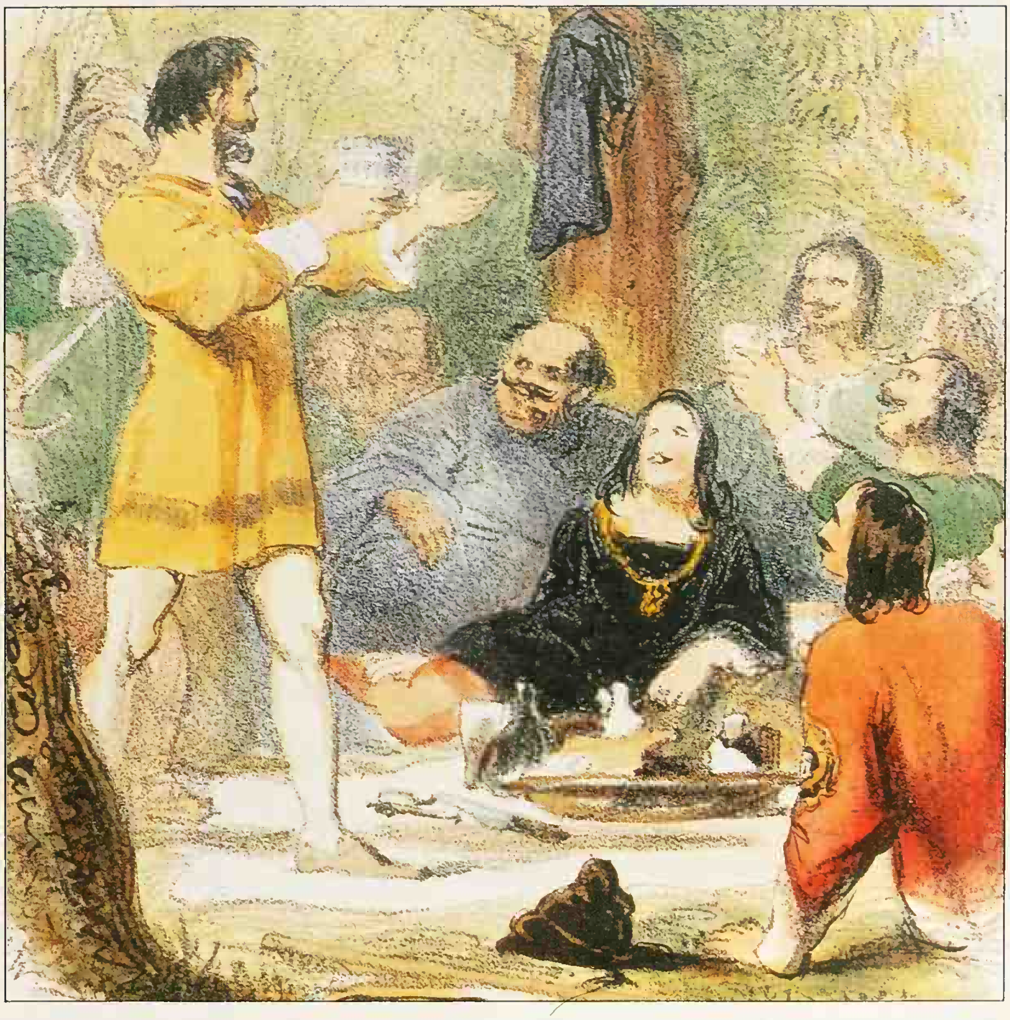
It was over his shoulder, and indistinctly, that he first thought he saw a face, a little, evil, wedge-shaped face, looking out at him from a hole. When he turned and confronted it, the thing had vanished.

He quickened his pace, telling himself cheerfully not to begin imagining things or there would be simply no end to it. He passed another hole, and another, and another; and then – yes! – no! – yes! certainly a little narrow face, with hard eyes, had flashed up for an instant from a hole, and was gone. He hesitated – braced himself up for an effort and strode on . . .

If he could only get away from the holes in the banks, he thought, there would be no more faces. He swung off the path and plunged into the untrodden places of the wood.

Then the whistling began.

Kenneth Grahame *The Wind in the Willows*



Mansell Collection

et scared of it. Robinson Crusoe, the Swiss amily Robinson, Tarzan of the apes, and ipling's Mowgli are other fictional exploraions of the same basic theme.

utlaws of the Greenwood

The wild man of legend has his prototypes n real madmen who took to the woods to scape from the hostility of the sane, but is closeness to Nature connects him with wo other figures, the Green Man who peronifies the life of vegetation (see GREEN; EGETATION SPIRITS), and the unearthly woodman who is the keeper of the forest nd its creatures (Tom Bombadil in *The ord of the Rings*). In 'The Lady of the ountain', one of the stories in the *Mabinoion* (see MABINOGION), Cynon rides through he forest and comes to a clearing with a ound in the middle of it. On the mound sits huge black man who has one foot, one eye in he centre of his forehead, and a massive iron lub. He is the woodman, ugly to look at but ot ugly in disposition, and he has power over nimals. He demonstrates this to Cynon, ho describes the scene. 'He took the club in is hand and with it struck a stag a mighty low till it gave a mighty belling, and in answer o its belling wild animals came till they were s numerous as stars in the firmament . . . And he looked on them and bade them go raze. And then they bowed down their heads nd did him obeisance, even as humble subects would do to their lord.'

A giant guards the cedar forest in the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (see GILGAMESH) and in some of his aspects seems to ersonify a forest fire. His roaring is like the storm, his mouth is fire, his breath is death. Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu, another natural man', penetrate the forest through n enchanted gate, which paralyses Enkidu's hand when he touches it. They come to he mountain which is the home of the gods, and the sacred cedar which Gilgamesh fells with an axe. When the giant, Humbaba or Huwawa, appears, the sight terrifies even he valorous Gilgamesh, but the sun god sends eight great winds which hold Humbaba ast, and Gilgamesh cuts off his head.

Another variety of forest wild man is the utlaw, wild because he has been placed utside the pale of society and outside the rotection of the law, and wild in the sense hat, as Maurice Keen says, he is 'a deserate man and he has recourse to desperate and violent remedies' and 'a cold and callous brutality'. The forests of medieval England sheltered thieves, vagabonds, fugitives from justice, men who had been turned off their land, rebels and misfits of all sorts. The poor, themselves suffering in a hard, rigidly stratified society, romanticized them and credited them with superhuman abilities. There grew up the picture of the merry outlaw in the greenwood, free as a bird, roistering on good ale and forbidden venison, robbing the rich and giving to the poor, the enemy of pomp, privilege and tyranny. Far the most famous of them is Robin Hood who, dressed in Lincoln green, has a connection with the Green Man and the May Day ceremonies (see ROBIN HOOD).

The forest is now a sanctuary and the wild man or natural man a proud, heroic figure, admired because he is free of the chains and shackles of society. The same aura surrounds highwaymen, and romantic wanderers and free spirits, nomadic motor cyclists, tramps and hippies, but here the lure of the wildwood has turned into the longing for the open road.

RICHARD CAVENDISH

FURTHER READING: *The Mabinogion*, trans. G. and T. Jones (Biblio Dist., 1976); *Sir Orfeo*, trans. by Brian Stone in *Medieval English Verse* (Penguin, 1964). See also E. Jung and M. L. von Franz, *The Grail Legend* (Sigo Press); M. Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1961); A. Porteous, *Forest Folklore*, (Gale, 1968, c1928).

In many respects a typical member of Victorian society, 'Mrs Willett' was also a non-professional medium who played an essential part in the 'cross-correspondences', communications which purported to come from the spirit world

MRS WILLETT

UNTIL AFTER her death on 31 August 1956, Mrs Charles Coombe Tennant was known in the literature of psychical research as 'Mrs Willett'. She was a most remarkable non-professional medium.

Born on 1 November 1874, and christened Winifred Margaret, she was the only child of George Edward Pearce-Serocold (1828–1912) by his second wife, Mary Richardson of Derwen Fawr, near Swansea. Her paternal ancestors had been closely connected since the middle of the 18th century with the University of Cambridge and with the vicarage of the neighbouring village of Cherryhinton.

On 12 December 1895, in her 22nd year, she married Charles Coombe Tennant (1852–1928) of Cadoxton Lodge, Glamorganshire. He was the head of a wealthy and able family, originally of industrialists, who had sprung from northern England and had in the 18th century settled in Glamorganshire and acquired and developed property there. One of his sisters, Eveleen, had married F. W. H. Myers (see MYERS), one of the pioneers of psychical research in England. Mrs Coombe Tennant, thus related by marriage to him, came to like and admire him greatly; but she actively disliked his wife Eveleen, and she had no very friendly feelings for the latter's sister Dorothy, who married the explorer H. M. Stanley and eventually wrote his biography.

The Coombe Tennants had four children. The eldest son, George Christopher, and the only daughter, Daphne, died in youth. Daphne, who was born in 1907, lived only one year and seven months, but exhibited during that short period a most remarkable personality. Christopher, a young man of brilliant promise who became an officer in the Welsh Guards, was killed in Flanders in 1917 in his 20th year. Naturally, these early deaths of two very remarkable children had a profound effect on their mother. In August 1908 she wrote, and had privately printed, a memoir of Daphne. And she contributed a memoir of her eldest son to the book, entitled *Christopher*, containing many of his letters, which was compiled by Sir Oliver Lodge and published in 1918.

Mrs Coombe Tennant combined marked practical interests and abilities with outstanding gifts of mediumship. She was in many aspects a typical Victorian society lady, but she combined this with strong, and rather unusually radical, social and political interests. She was an early and enthusiastic supporter of women's suffrage. In politics she was a strong Liberal, and for a time a great admirer of Lloyd George. She took an active part in local administration in Glamorganshire, and was one of the first women JPs on the bench there. After the end of the First World War the British Government appointed her a delegate to the Assembly of the newly founded League of Nations. Of Welsh descent on her mother's side, she became a keen Welsh nationalist; played an active part and held high office in the National Eisteddfod; and was a discriminating patron of Welsh painting. Beside this, she made for herself a fine collection of modern French pictures.

It was probably through her brother-in-law, F. W. H. Myers, that she first became aware of the Society for Psychical Research and met some of its prominent Cambridge members, such as Mrs Sidgwick, Mrs Verrall, and the latter's daughter Helen (afterwards Mrs W. H. Salter). But it was not until after the death of her daughter Daphne that her interest in psychical research became strong and her own very distinctive type of mediumship developed. Its nature, and the course of its development, are thoroughly described in Gerald Balfour's 'Study of the Psychological Aspects of Mrs. Willett's Mediumship', which he contributed to the S.P.R. *Proceedings* in 1935.

The 'Palm Sunday' Case

The salient points are as follows. She had attempted automatic writing in the summer of 1908, after Daphne's death, and had obtained messages purporting to come from Myers, who had died in 1901. She had not been much impressed with these, but had nevertheless continued. Then, early in January 1909, came a sudden development. In a script, ostensibly coming from Myers, she received an order to stop writing, and to try to apprehend the ideas which would be put into her head, and to record them in ordinary writing as soon afterwards as possible. It was stated in the scripts that Edmund Gurney (see GURNEY), who had died in 1888, was involved with Myers in a special experiment which they were to make 'from the other side' with her help.

The next stage was that the 'Myers-persona' and the 'Gurney-persona', as we may call them, expressed and reiterated in the scripts the wish that she should give sittings in the presence of Sir Oliver Lodge, who had been a friend and collaborator of theirs in their lifetimes, and should dictate to him the impressions which she would receive from them. After considerable resistance she consented to approach Lodge, who was then a complete stranger to her. They first met on 17 May 1909 and she afterwards had many sittings in his presence, with him as note-taker.

Next, the Gurney-persona insisted that Gerald Balfour (later the second Earl of Balfour) should be introduced as a sitter and note-taker. He had been a close friend of Gurney's, had co-operated with him in psychical research, and was deeply read in philosophy. Mrs Coombe Tennant, who had never met him, resisted the suggestion, but eventually consented to approach him. The first sitting was on 4 June 1911. Thereafter he became almost the only sitter with her, and during the next 20 years hundreds of sittings were held, sometimes at Cadoxton and sometimes at the Balfours' home at Fisher's Hill, Woking, in Surrey.

These sittings largely took the form of elaborate conversations, with questions and answers, between the sitter and the ostensible communicators. The latter, purporting to be the surviving spirits of Myers and Gurney, explained the use which they claimed to be making deliberately of Mrs Coombe Tennant, the methods which they employed and the difficulties which they met in attempting various kinds of communication through her. Whatever their origin, these communications are on a high intellectual level. They are some of the most impressive recorded products of trance-mediumship.

Long before Balfour's study was published, two papers, one by Sir Oliver Lodge and the other by Mrs Verrall, appeared in 1911 in the S.P.R. *Proceedings* concerning the 'cross correspondences' in which 'Mrs Willett' played an essential part (see CROSS-CORRESPONDENCES). Balfour himself published two papers on the same subject, in 1914 and 1917. These four papers have become classics in the literature of psychical research. Between them they make it plain in detail that in her scripts 'Mrs Willett' showed a knowledge of particular facts and incidents and of highly recondite classical lore, which cannot plausibly be assigned to any source normally available to Mrs Coombe Tennant. These are, moreover, highly characteristic of the interests, the learning, and the idiosyncrasies of the deceased scholars, in particular Myers, Verrall, and Butcher, who were ostensibly communicating through her.

In 1960 Joan Balfour, daughter-in-law of Gerald, published in the S.P.R. *Proceedings* a long paper on the 'Palm Sunday' case. This describes how 'Mrs Willett', in a long series of automatic scripts and trance-utterances, between 1912 and 1929, seems to be referring cryptically, but unmistakably, to a certain very private and personal matter in the early life of Gerald's elder brother, the Conservative statesman Arthur Balfour (1848–1930). This was his love for Catherine Mary Lyttelton and her tragic death from typhus on Palm Sunday 1875, before he had declared himself. A sitting between Balfour and 'Mrs Willett' in 1916 is referred to and certain incidents in his last illness are described, when he was a very old man in 1929, in which 'Mrs Willett', who was staying in the house, seemed to be aware of the presence and intervention of Catherine Lyttelton's surviving spirit.

Mrs Coombe Tennant died in 1956 in her 82nd year, but on the face of it this was by no means the end of her psychic activities. For from 7 August 1957 to 6 March 1960, Miss Geraldine Cummins, who had been unknown to her personally, obtained a series of 40 automatic scripts purporting to come from her surviving spirit. They were published in 1965 under the title *Swan on a Black Sea*, and they have been the subject of much discussion since. Whatever may be their ultimate origin, they seem to be redolent of Mrs Coombe Tennant's personality, and to contain bits of highly individual information about her doings and feelings throughout her earthly life.
(See also AUTOMATIC ART.)

C. D. BROAD

WILL-O-THE-WISP

MYSTERIOUS LIGHTS seen hovering or movng about in an eerie manner, especially over fens and marshes or in churchyards, have acquired a grim reputation in Europe under a great variety of names: including will-o-the-wisp, jack-o-lantern, fox fire, fairy fire, *ignis fatuus* ('foolish fire', because only a fool follows it), elf light, friar's lantern, corpse light, corpse candle, William with the ittle flame, Jack of the bright light, fetch candle or fetch light, a'fetch' being a person's shadowy counterpart or double (see DOUBLE). The lights may be caused by atmospheric conditions or possibly by gnition of gases emanating from decaying plant or animal matter. They look like small, glowing balls of fire or like candle flames and are generally associated with the souls of the dead (see CANDLE). In northern Europe spectral fires were seen on burial mounds and were believed to be the souls of dead warriors, guarding the treasure which had been buried with them.

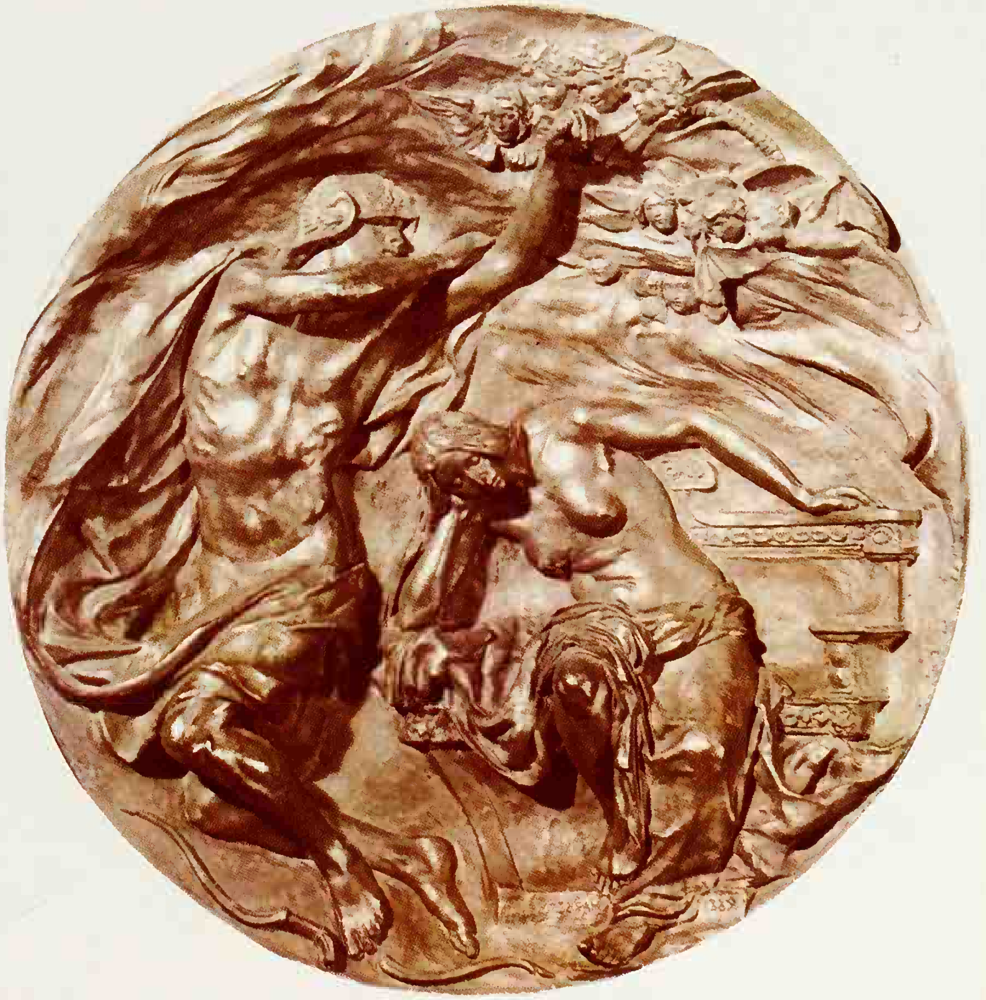
A will-o-the-wisp, jack-o-lantern or gnis fatuus, sometimes believed to be a wandering soul which cannot find refuge in heaven or hell, or sometimes a malignant mp, wanders about in an erratic way and, if you follow it, it is likely at best to get you hopelessly lost and at worst to lead you to your death in a bog or pool, though there are a few reports of the light being helpful and eading people out of danger. There are also stories of the will-o-the-wisp chasing a terrified victim through mud and brambles until he is confused and then leaving him with the sound of mocking laughter.

In German folklore, the light is thought o be the soul of someone who in life moved or disregarded a boundary marker, a way of stealing part of a neighbour's and which has been a particularly detested crime in many societies. The Finnish *liekkio*, flaming one', is the soul of a child who has been buried in the forest.

A corpse candle or fetch light, like a small flame moving through the air in the dark, may be a warning of your own imminent death if it hovers before you, or of the death of someone you love. Or it may hover at a place which will soon be the scene of a death. It may cross your line of vision between your home and the grave which waits for you in the churchyard. More often, it is seen going from the churchyard to the house of a person who is near death, in which case it is tracing in reverse the route which the funeral will take, or lingering on the roof of a house in which a death will follow.

The sea-going equivalent of the corpse candle is a glowing light called St Elmo's Fire, which is caused by electrical discharges during thunderstorms and is accompanied by a crackling sound, like the noise of twigs burning. It is seen on the masts and yards of ships and is generally interpreted, correctly, as a sign that the worst of the storm is over. However, if it comes down onto the deck, this is an ominous sign, and if it is seen glowing round a sailor's head, his death is very close to him.

An alternative name, corposant, is derived from Portuguese *corpo santo*, 'holy body', the body being that of St Elmo himself, the patron saint of Mediterranean seamen. His name is probably a corruption of Erasmus, the name of a martyr of the early 4th century who was said to have died at sea during a storm, after promising the crew that if they were not fated to die in the storm, he would come back and show himself to them. They waited anxiously and presently a glowing light appeared at the masthead.



Tate Gallery London

A glowing ball of fire, the will-o-the-wisp, ack-o-lantern or *ignis fatuus*, has been known to lead men to their deaths: *Ignis Fatuus*, an imaginative 19th century relief by Henry Alfred Pegram

WILLOW

A TRADITIONAL EMBLEM of grief and melancholy, the willow is also a symbol of forsaken love, and it was once customary for the ilted to wear a willow garland. In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare describes the forsaken Queen of Carthage:

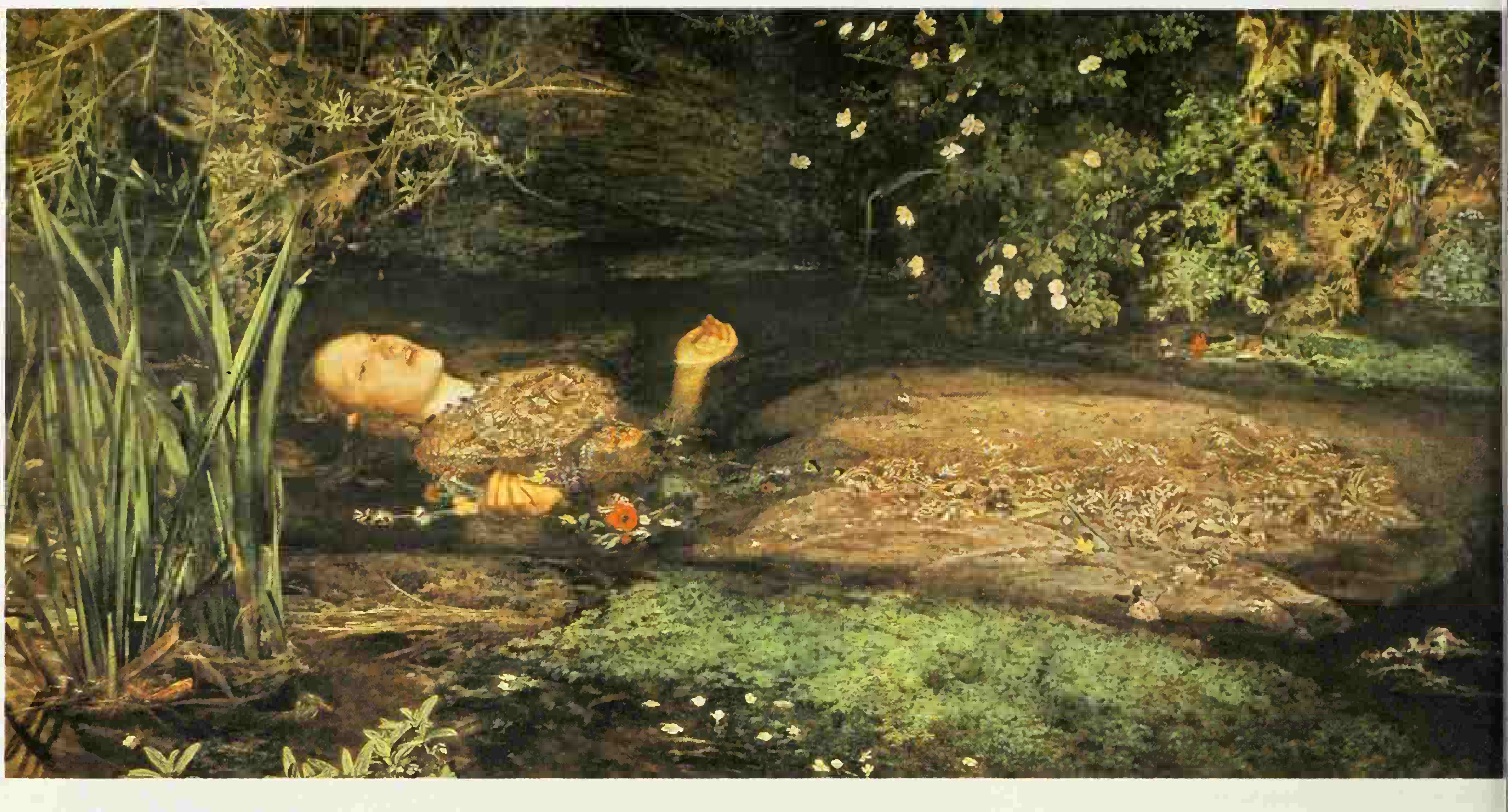
> In such a night
> Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
> Upon the wild sea-banks. . . .

Ophelia hangs her symbolic bunch of wild flowers upon a willow that 'grows aslant a brook', and Desdemona sings 'a song of "willow"' about a jilted girl, which ends 'Sing all a green willow must be my garland'. Unkind people would even send a willow garland to someone who had been jilted, often on the occasion of the unfaithful lover's marriage to another. In Wales the willow wreath was replaced by a peeled hazel wand.

It was not only the jilted but the bereaved who should wear the willow. In *Henry IV* (Part 3) when Bona, sister of the Queen of France, hears of Edward IV's marriage with Elizabeth Grey, she says: 'Tell him, in hope he'll prove a widower shortly, I'll wear the willow-garland for his sake.'

The association with grief dates only from the late Middle Ages; there is little doubt that the biblical 'willows' upon which the exiled Jews hung their harps as they wept by the rivers of Babylon were the Euphrates aspen, a kind of poplar. Even the 18th century Swedish botanist Linnaeus was misled by the Bible into christening the weeping willow, which actually comes from China, *Salix babylonica*.

There is, however, an ancient association between the willow and death. In the 2nd century AD Pausanias, the Greek historian, wrote of a grove sacred to Persephone, queen of the underworld, where willow and poplars grew, and also describes Orpheus holding a willow branch in the underworld. On the island of the enchantress Circe there was said to be a grove of willows, from which corpses hung. In China coffins were covered



Associated with death by the ancient Greeks, the willow is traditionally an emblem of forsaken love; in *Hamlet* Ophelia hangs her wild flowers on a 'willow aslant a brook' before drowning herself: painting by Millais

with willow boughs, and the trees were planted in cemeteries to suggest immortality. The Chinese also considered the tree to be magical and capable of averting harm and illness, a belief that is also found in Ireland, where the pussy willow, one of the 'seven noble trees of the land', was a charm against enchantment.

Because of its ancient sacredness the willow is one of the trees that should be invoked when a person 'touches wood'. The pussy willow provided the English substitute for palm branches on Palm Sunday (see PALM). It is sometimes thought to be unlucky to take the catkins or 'pussies' indoors, but more often this is said to bring good luck, especially if they are brought into the house on May Day.

In certain places the willow was associated with festivals held on St John's Eve, 23 June. In the Ile de France a figure made from pliable willow wands was ceremoniously burnt and at Luchon, in southern France, a representation of an actual willow tree was made from the wands. Snakes were thrown upon it and it was then set alight. The background to these two extraordinary rites is obscure.

As with hazel, wands of willow were important in various magical operations, especially divination. In northern England, a girl who wanted to know whom she would marry could perform an alarming ritual. With her willow wand in her left hand, she had to leave the house secretly and run three times around it, saying, 'He that's to be my gude man come and grip the end of it'. On the third time round a likeness of her future husband would grasp the other end.

Because willow trees are often hollow, and decay easily, it was believed that a child beaten with a willow rod would be stunted, while an animal so beaten would suffer internal pains. However, willow trees were sometimes used in an ancient cure for children's ailments, notably rupture. The child was passed through a natural hole or artificial cleft in the tree, which was then bound or closed up with willow twigs.

Willow is one of the few cases where the Doctrine of Signatures, the theory that 'like cures like' (see DISEASE), has proved to have a scientific basis. Because the tree grows in wet places it was believed to be a remedy for rheumatism, which can be caused by damp. A magical method recorded in the Netherlands was for the afflicted person to make three knots in a branch on an old tree, saying 'Good morning, Old One, I give thee the cold.' Later, according to Gerard, the 16th century herbalist, branches of osier, a kind of willow, would be brought into the sick-room; but the country remedy was to take an infusion of the bark. During the 19th century this remedy was investigated and willow (*salix*) was found to contain salicylic acid, which is now used in the treatment of rheumatism.

In the language of flowers, the weeping willow is not surprisingly the code for mourning, but the water willow represents freedom.

A. J. HUXLEY

'O for the wings of a dove': the human longing for wings and flight has been accomplished in one sense, for man can and does fly in his dreams

WINGS

PERHAPS BECAUSE man's body, wingless and earth-bound, has never normally been able to levitate, let alone fly, the ability to take off and soar freely away from terra firma, as demonstrated by birds, has aroused man's awe and longing. Ancient man peopled the mysterious upper and lower regions of his world with imagined creatures of unhampered mobility, often with winged appendages, whether for flight or not, as a symbol of extra-terrestrial power.

In some ancient myths, the sky itself was depicted as a winged vulture, and the Egyptian sun god Re, when he was disenchanted with human beings, was advised to mount the Heavenly Cow, rise up and become the sky itself. The Mesopotamian god Anum created a winged bull, called the Bull of Heaven, and sent it to earth to redress a slight to his daughter Ishtar (the wings, however, did not prevent the bull from being slain).

In Greek myths Hermes (see HERMES), messenger of the god Zeus, wore winged sandals and a winged hat to make him invincibly swift and mobile. Eros, a beautiful winged youth, sped where he willed to shoot his victims with arrows of love (see EROS). The Sphinx, a woman-fronted lion with an impressive wing-spread, killed people who could not answer her riddles, epitomizing the evil use of supernatural flight.

The Fall of Icarus

Of several winged horses in ancient myth, Pegasus, steadfast and courageous, travelled the air faster than the wind, attained the heights of Olympus and drew the thunder-chariots of Zeus across the heavens. A Borak ('Lightning'), milk-white and with the wings of an eagle, carried Mohammed to the seventh heaven.

Less appealing, the winged Harpies

which were partly women but had eagle's claws and beaks, swooped down viciously to seize man's food and depart, leaving a terrible stench (see HARPY). The griffin (or gryphon) had the head, wings and feet of an eagle and the hind-part of a lion. Only the female was winged; the male counterpart had protruding spikes instead. Aeschylus called griffins 'the hounds of Zeus, who never bark, with beaks like birds', and they were considered fierce guardians against theft. Nemesis, avenger of wrongdoing, was a winged woman carrying a sword or whip, who travelled the air in a griffin-drawn chariot. The hippogriff was a variant of the griffin, with the body of a horse, the forefront of a griffin and an eagle's wings and claws.

The terrifying dragons that appear in many legends are a compound of many creatures, including serpent, lion, antelope, fish and eagle. Although some alternately ran and flew, many seem to have been able to fly a considerable distance, and most were depicted with wings, signifying the ultimate in supernatural endowment (see DRAGON). The wings of the Roc (or Rukh), according to Marco Polo, who had heard of it from many sources, had a span of '30 paces', and the wing feathers were '12 paces long'. It could rise to great heights, swoop down on an elephant, bear it far up, then drop it and smash it, and, of course, descend to eat it (see ROC).

A moral lay in the experience of Daedalus, architect of the labyrinth for the Minotaur in Crete. Daedalus did not have wings at all, but when King Minos imprisoned him and his son Icarus in the labyrinth, Daedalus fashioned some with wax and glue, and he and Icarus took to the one available escape route, the air. Icarus, however, intoxicated by his new-found freedom and power, did not heed his father's warning to fly a middle course between the sun and the sea. He flew too near the sun and his beautiful wings melted. He fell into the sea and drowned. His sorrowful father flew safely on to Sicily.

Peter Pan

In later folklore (and theology), both angels and devils had the power of flight, and angels were generally illustrated with feathered wings, which they apparently did not need to flap to encompass distance; angels' thoughts and desires sped them without this effort.

By the 17th century, it was generally believed that angels ruled all spheres above the moon, and devils all below. The seraphim, highest order of angels, had no less than six wings. The main business of angels was the salvation of men's souls, and of devils the damnation of them. By purity of character, men might themselves become angels when they died, thus finally acquiring the supremacy of wings.

Fairies were considered nearer to devils than angels. Supposedly composed of condensed or congealed air, they took countless shapes, and were more often earth-oriented than celestial, though some were said to have been descended from gods. How, when and why they first acquired wings, is uncertain, though probably the form of angels was an influence.

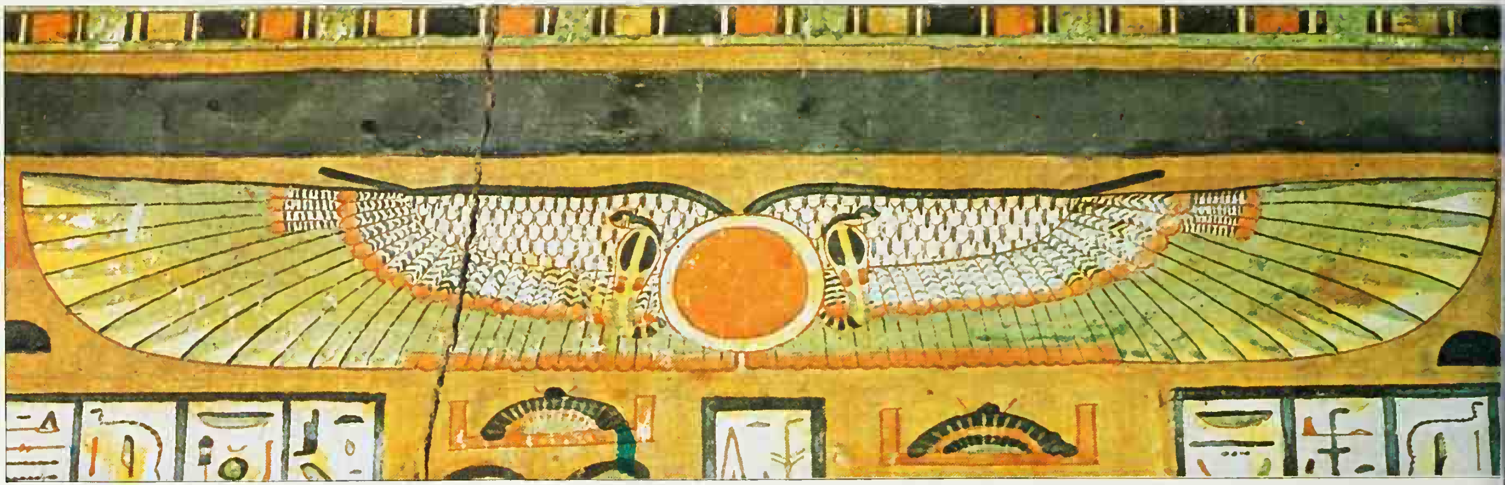
Though fairies are frequently without them, their ability to become invisible in one place and visible in another, to steal in and out of shapes and sizes, has the same supernatural freedom of movement. In Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon has just arrived from India, and Puck takes but a few minutes to travel from England to Athens and back. Oberon summarizes the fairies' eerie form of flight when he says to Titania:

> Then my queen in silence sad,
> Trip we after the night's shade;
> We the globe can compass soon,
> Swifter than the wandering moon.

The human child's longing for wings, or their equivalent for flight, is never more vividly portrayed or more happily fulfilled than in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Peter, the boy who refused to grow up, knew how to fly. He taught the Darling children how to do it by simply believing they could, and then taking a huge jump from their beds into the air. Suddenly, as if wing-borne, they lifted up and followed him out of the window, gliding with speed and exhilarating ease to

Jeffrey Craig

Although angels were generally depicted as having feathered wings in medieval art, they apparently did not need to flap them to encompass distance; it was believed that their thoughts and desires alone were able to move them: winged cherubs surrounding a statue, in Sicily



Above Symbols of extra-terrestrial power, wings were the attributes of many deities of the ancient world: winged sun disc, detail from painting on the coffin of a priestess of the Egyptian god Amen-Re **Below** Although fairies are more often earth-orientated than celestial beings, they are frequently depicted with wings

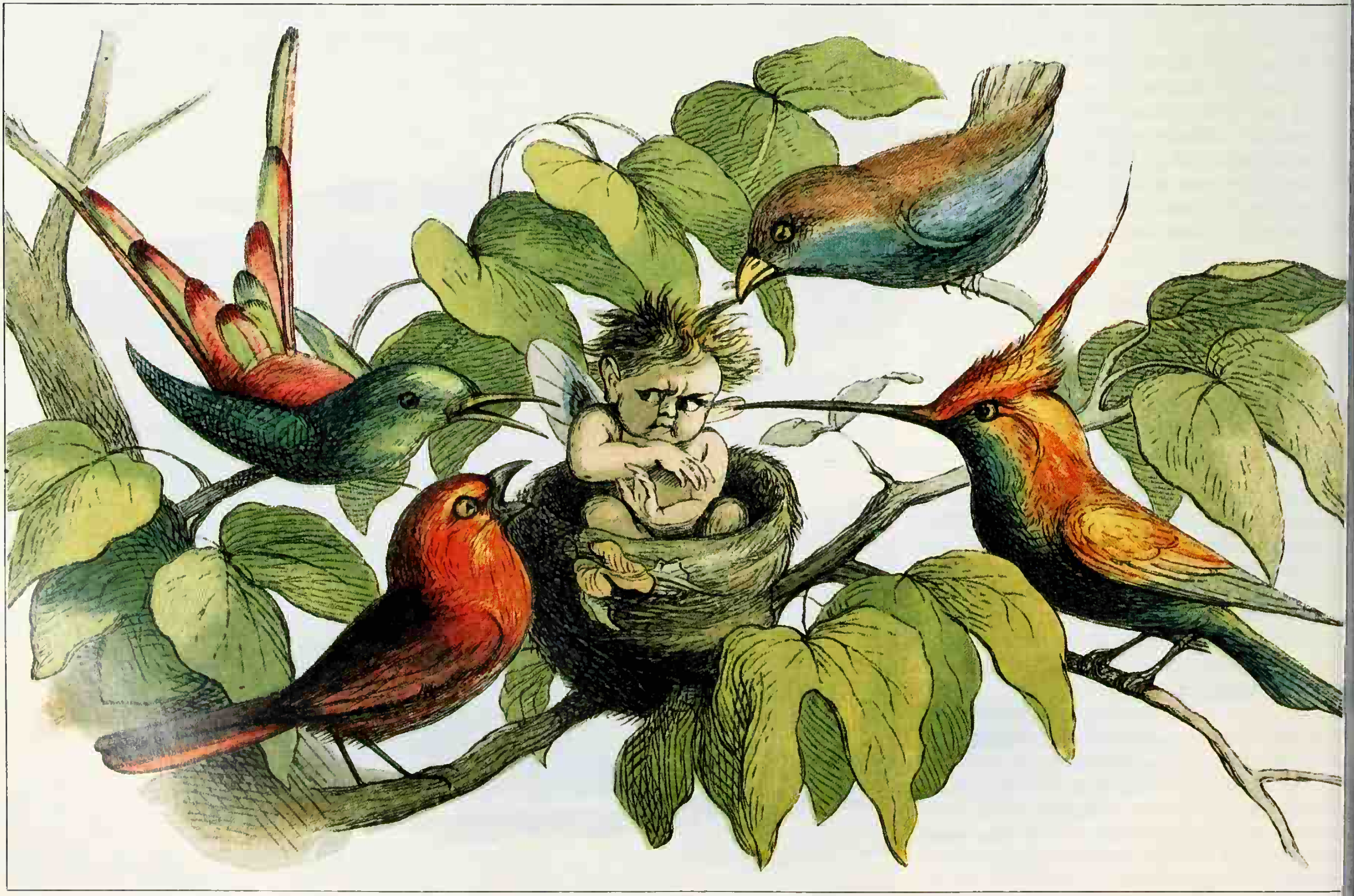
'Never-Never Land'. That their escape from adulthood had sad repercussions did not linger in children's minds as much as the identification with Peter's magic ability.

The art of flying, with or without wings, has been accomplished in one sense – man can and does fly in his dreams. In dreams man may have the pleasure of being conscious that he has risen out of his body's limited sphere. He may ascend only a short way, looking down at his still reclining and inert body, or rise high into the sky and fly across an ocean. Techniques range from a rapid flapping with the elbows, a forward thrust and outspread of arms that now act as wings, to a controlled tilting and angling of the body to balance it in relation to the air. Flying dreams of any kind are primarily satisfying and delightful; whether man merely rises above his normal confinement, or right out of it, the added dimension of levitation and flight removes frustrating barriers to the supernatural.

Scientists are not sure how real wings were evolved, and it is now believed that they may not be appendages at all, but the extension of the *chitin*, the outer integument or body wall. In any case, the outstretched human arm is just similar enough to the wing structure of birds to tantalize man with the possibility of developing flight power. Man has spent untold amounts of time strengthening appropriate muscles and appending strange devices to his person, to no avail In vicarious achievement of his desire, he has flown kites and balloons, invented meta wings and even rocket propulsion. He has become airborne, but still cannot elevate himsel more than a few feet off the earth, and this fo but a fleet moment. Until he can do so, ma will continue to be fascinated with the supernatural connotations of wings and flight.

(See also ANGELS; BAT; BIRDS; FAIRIES SKY.)

NONA COXHEA



WINTER

There is food everywhere, heavy, rich food. And laughter. A positive urge to spend seizes n everyone . . .' What sounds like our modern Christmas is in fact an account of a pagan inter festival in the 4th century AD

N NORTHERN LANDS the season of cold, wet nd darkness has also traditionally been the ime when the freest rein is given to fantasy. t was in winter that whole families in ygone ages huddled together in smoky uts listening, as the storms raged outside, o sagas and folktales. In winter, more han any other season, ghosts stalk abroad, nd in the countryside a solitary light, limpsed in the distance by a lone wayfarer, an flood the soul with emotion. Winter has lways been, too, a time for feasting and elebrating. When harsh weather made arfare and even trivial disputes between eighbours impossible, and the concerted ostility of the elements made men mindful f their own essential brotherhood, it was atural to think of winter as the season of oodwill. There was also the gloom and edium of long nights crying out for relief, nd when the days began at last to lengthen, owever imperceptibly, men looked upon it s the rebirth of the sun, and celebrated the ativity of a god.

The earliest of these winter festivals bout which we know anything was the acaea in Babylon, a celebration of the New ear, lasting several days. From the third illennium down to the very end of Mesopoamian civilization, a few centuries before he Christian era, mock battles were held very year, in which the king impersonated he god Marduk, who had won a mighty ictory over Tiamat, the watery goddess of haos, on the very first New Year's day, hen the world had been created (see REATION MYTHS; MARDUK). In Babylonia ew temples were inaugurated only on New ear's day, and from this day a king officially ated the beginning of his reign. According o later Greek writers, the Babylonian acaea was a time of sexual licence, feasting nd disguising. Slaves gave orders to their asters during the days of the festival, and criminal was chosen to have royal rights onferred upon him, only to be executed at he end of the celebrations. Whether these reeks are reading contemporary practices n the Roman world into the Babylonian etting it is impossible to say, but if their reports are accurate, then the Babylonian festival must have been the ancestor of a number of similar celebrations in the ancient world.

The Roman Saturnalia, celebrated at the end of December, was a festival of merrymaking and exchanging gifts which left its mark on our own Christmas celebrations. All work and business was suspended, originally for three days, but eventually for seven, and slaves were free to say and do what they liked. Gambling, usually punishable with a fine fixed at four times the value of the stakes, was officially permitted on these 'best of days', as the Roman poet Catullus calls the Saturnalia. Rich men gave their 'clients' presents of silverware, and children received little wax dolls.

A Greek writer of the 4th century AD, the sophist Libanius, has left a description of the winter festival as it was celebrated in his own city of Antioch: 'There is food everywhere, heavy, rich food. And laughter. A positive urge to spend seizes on everyone, so that people who have taken pleasure in saving up the whole year, now think it's a good idea to squander. The streets are full of people and coaches, staggering under the load of gifts. Children are free of the dread of their teachers, and for slaves the festival is as good as a holiday. Another good thing about it – it teaches people not to be too fond of money, but to let it circulate from hand to hand.'

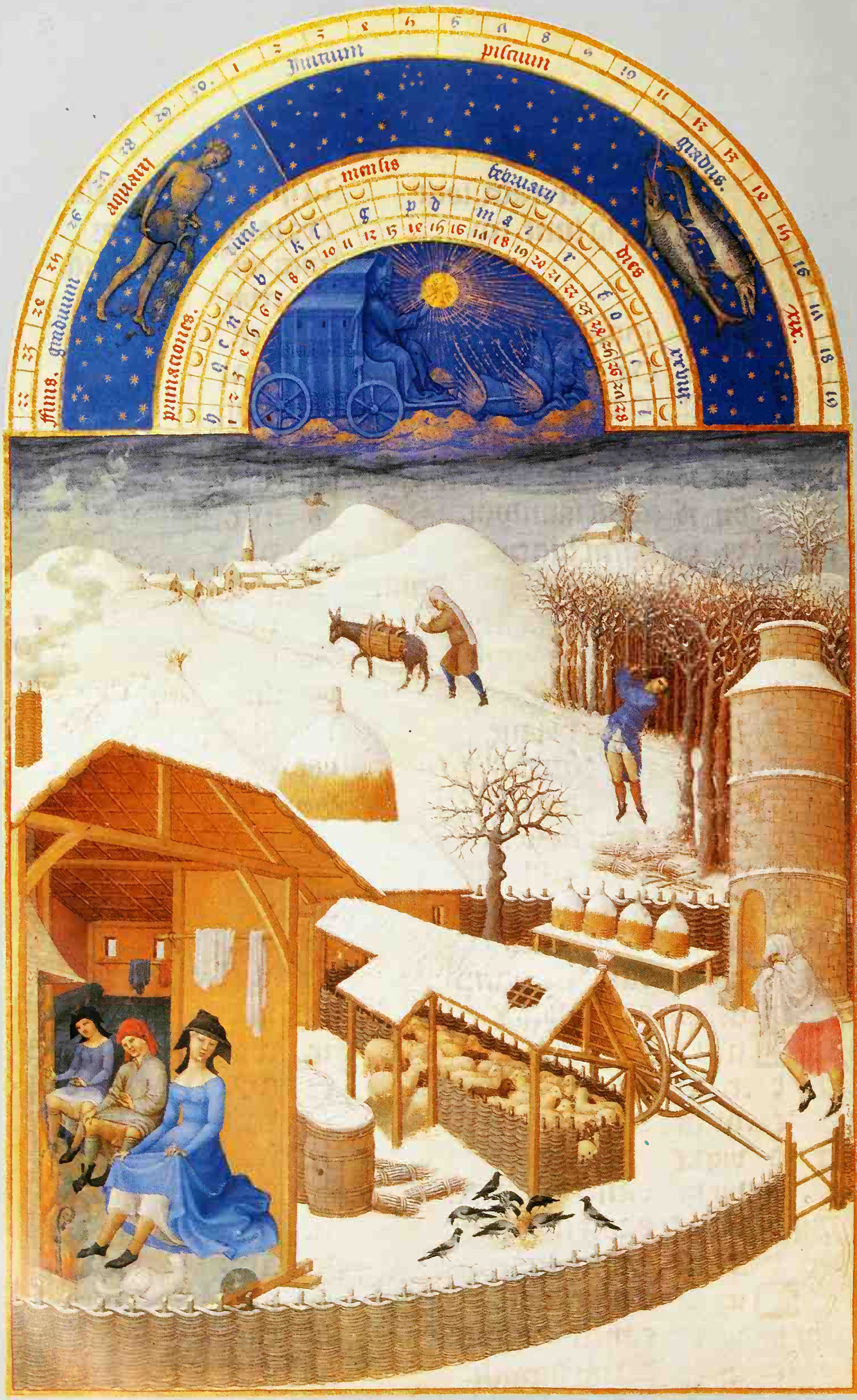
Libanius was an early opponent of Christianity who nevertheless had Christians among his pupils, one of them St John Chrysostom. He is here describing pagan festivities in general, though he seems to have had the Saturnalia particularly in mind. The corresponding Greek festival, the Kronia, was celebrated at harvest time, but the Greeks had winter festivals, including the rustic Dionysia, held in December, and celebrated in villages with a burlesque procession; the Lenaea, or feast of the wine vats, celebrated in January with a procession, sacrifice and competing plays; and the Anthesteria, held during three days about the time that we call February, when the casks were opened and the new wine was tasted.

All the winter festivals were connected in some way with Dionysus, the god of wine (see DIONYSUS), and the Greeks in fact divided the cult-year into two halves, the Dionysiac and the Apollonian, corresponding to winter and summer. A similar division was made by the ancient Hindus, for whom winter was the time for ancestor worship and summer for the gods of Nature. In other parts of the world, too, winter is the time for appeasing the spirits of the dead. On the third day of the Anthesteria, the celebrations were held within the family circle, with rites in appeasement of ancestors. This festival came at the end of winter in Greece – indeed, it was to celebrate the end of winter marked by the appearance of the year's first flowers – but in northern Europe the cult of the dead was celebrated either in autumn, as among the Saxons, or in early or midwinter, as among the Scandinavians and Celts. In these pre-Christian festivals, bonfires were lighted to represent the waning and waxing sun. The rites were absorbed into Christianity in the guise of All Saints' day on 1 November and All Souls' on 2 November. Winter festivals in commemoration of the dead were also celebrated in China until comparatively recent times.

The Last Winter

Connected perhaps with the cult of dead souls, but also with the general harshness of winter, is the widespread notion that the world will come to an end in the middle of a terrible winter. This is the *fimbul-vetr* of the Icelandic sagas. In one of these poems, Odin, the god of the dead (see ODIN), asks the wise giant Vafthrudnir which of mankind will survive the mighty winter, and is told Lif and Lifthrasir, hidden in Hoddmimir's wood. In a prose saga of the 13th century, it is prophesied that winter will precede the great Doom (see SCANDINAVIA). Snow will drive from all quarters, with sharp frost and cruel wind. The sun will have no power. Three such winters will follow in succession, without an intervening summer. There will be fighting all over the earth, with brother slaying brother.

In Iranian mythology, the rain of Malkosh devastates the earth, and snow and ice cause most of mankind to die of cold and famine. The only men and animals saved from this destructive winter are those who are herded together by one of the gods in a great enclosure. There is a related idea in St Mark's gospel (13.18), when Christ, in prophesying the misery and destruction


mensis
februarius
dies

Musée Condé, Chantilly/Giraudon

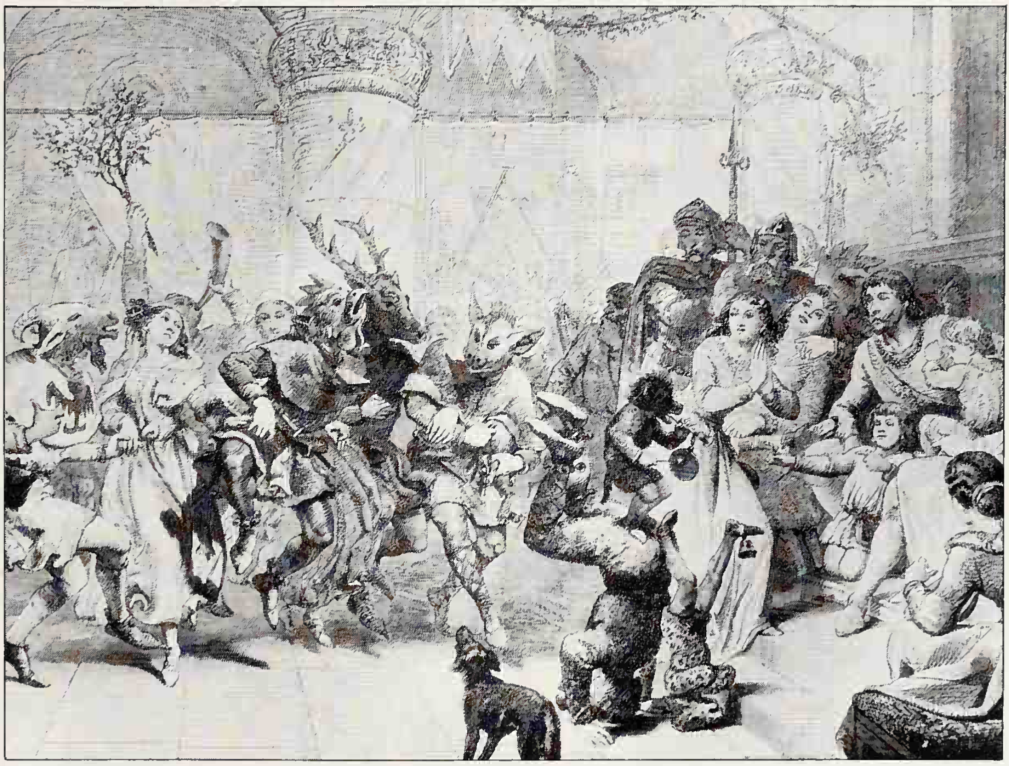
There is a widespread notion that the world will come to an end in the middle of a terrible winter

which will precede the Second Coming, urges his disciples to 'pray that it may not happen in winter'. Other verses in the same chapter may have inspired the passage in the Eddic saga about brother slaying brother, but whether the Iranian myth shows Christian influence, or whether even older notions connecting the end of the world with winter underlie both the myth and the gospel prophecy, is impossible to determine.

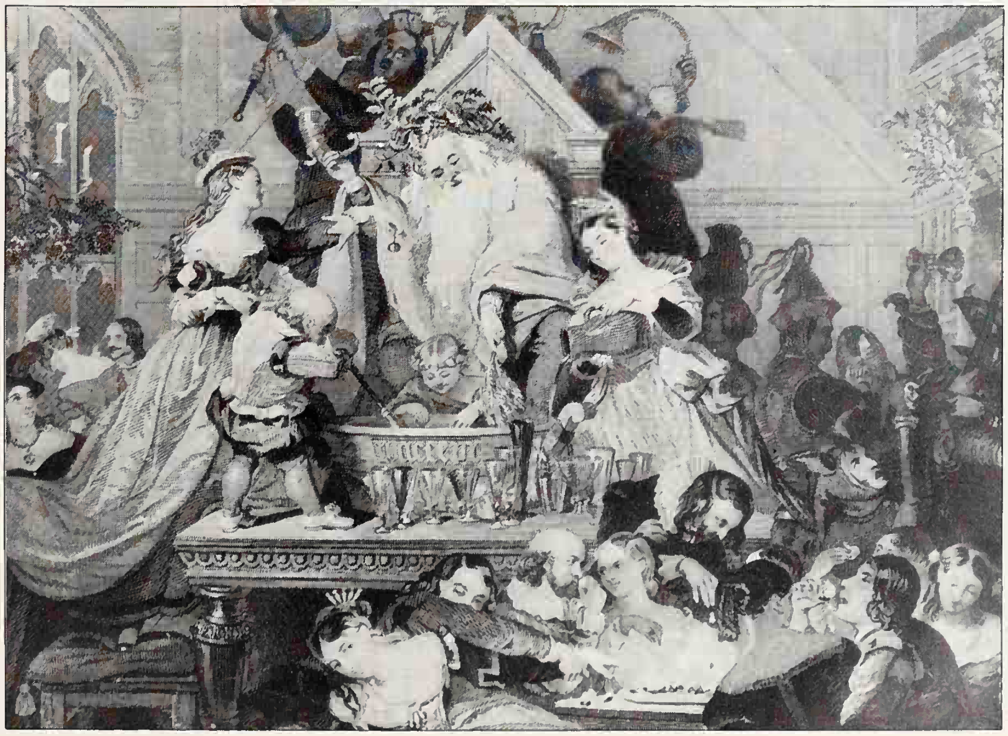
The Sleep of God

In astronomical terms, winter begins at the solstice on 21 or 22 December, and ends at the vernal equinox, on 20 March, but in northern latitudes winter begins, in popular estimation, much earlier. In many villages in the Upper Styria region of Austria, it was the custom to 'ring in' the winter as early as 24 August, the purpose of the ceremony being to frighten away the malevolent spirits of winter by making a loud noise. According to a saying current at one time in Aachen, Charlemagne goes to his winter quarters on St Giles's day (1 September) and leaves them on Ascension Day, a reference to the army of ghosts stationed in a magic mountain that Charlemagne still commands. In other parts of northern Europe, winter begins on 28 October, 1 November, or 11 November – St Martin's day, the saint riding on a white horse as the harbinger of snow. Colder weather is supposed to set in on St Catherine's day (25 November), but in a warm year when winter is late, St Andrew's day (30 November) finally marks the real onset of winter.

The day most commonly taken as midwinter is that of the conversion of St Paul (25 January). In more southerly climates, January and February are regarded as the true winter months. But it is curious that

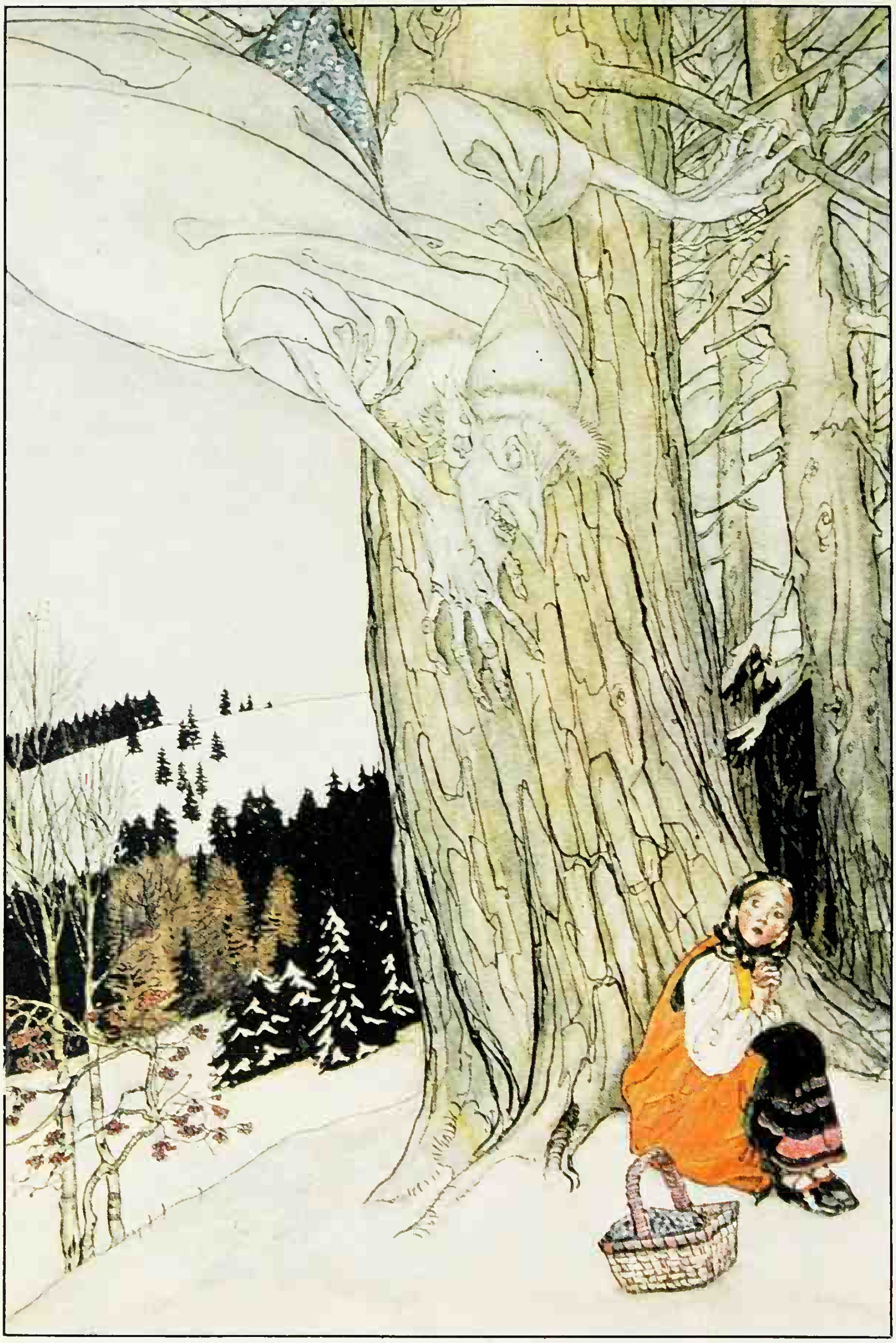


Mansell Collection



Mansell Collection

Left Illustration depicting the month of February, from the *Très Riches Heures*; probably as a result of the general harshness of the season, there is a widespread belief that the world will come to an end in the middle of a terrible winter *Above right* Christmas mummers and (*right*) the 'Wassail Bowl'; winter has always been a time for feasting and celebration, when the hostility of the elements made men conscious of their essential brotherhood; these traditional Christmas scenes reflect the pagan elements that are still an essential part of the Christian festival



In myth and folklore winter may be personified as a storm god or in the form of frost, ice or snow spirits *Left* Probably because of its beautiful, sparkling quality, frost seems to have stimulated man's myth-making faculty more than either snow or ice: *Jack Frost,* illustration by Arthur Rackham *Far right* Ice is the original stuff out of which the world is made in the myths of some Northern peoples: *Ice Fairy,* statuette by J. Causse

Victoria & Albert Museum

the Greek and Latin words for 'winter' (*kheimon, hiems*) are related to words in prehistoric languages meaning 'snow': the name Himalaya is cognate. In northern European languages, on the other hand, the words denoting winter are cognate with words meaning 'water' and 'wet'. The Greeks probably brought their word with them when they migrated in prehistoric times into their present country. In literature, at any rate, one can find as many references to rain as to snow and ice: 'The winter is past, the rain is over', says the Song of Solomon (2.11), words which Chaucer echoes: 'The winter is goon, with alle his reynes wete.'

In myth and folktale, winter is personified, either in himself, as a storm god (Kari in Nordic legend), or through frost, ice and snow spirits of one kind or another. There are traces in prehistoric myths of a single god or goddess wielding power over both winter and summer. The Asiatic Nature goddess known to the Greeks as Kubele (see CYBELE) held the keys of the earth, which she opened in summer and shut in winter. The Teutonic lunar goddess Holda (the Frau Holle or White Woman of German folklore) holds summer captive in her underworld kingdom during winter. When she shakes her bedclothes, it snows.

The idea that Nature is asleep in winter is an ancient one, and the Phrygians believed that the Deity himself was asleep in winter. In primitive belief, winter and death are often equated, a notion strikingly summed up in an oracle quoted by a Latin author about the time of the birth of Christ: 'The highest God is called Hades in winter.' Here again, there is a link with the winter cults of the dead already mentioned, and with ghosts, which are especially active in winter. In Nordic myths, winter is the time of the wanderings of Odin, or Wotan, the god of the dead.

The belief that dead ancestors are present in winter explains the practice of the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia who change their names at the beginning of winter, when the ghosts arrive, and adopt the names of their ancestors. They also form secret societies in winter, in place of their ordinary summer family life. The practice of exorcizing evil and evil spirits at either the beginning or end of winter is widespread among primitive peoples.

Probably owing to its beautiful, sparkling quality, frost seems to have stimulated the myth-making faculty of man more than either snow or ice. Jack Frost is our own personification of frost, and he seems quite a friendly figure compared with the evil frost giants of the Eddic sagas. These giants, the Hrimthursar, represent snow and ice as well as frost, and were descended from the giant Ymir, who was himself created out of ice. They had been driven out of their ancestral home by Odin and his band of Aesir, and dwelt in Utgard, the outlying world.

Porridge for the Frost Man

Frost is personified in Finnish magic songs, and Frost man appears as the brother of Mist man in a charming Japanese legend. But the frost spirits were taken most seriously by the Finnish tribes of Russia and Siberia, the Votiaks, the Cheremiss, the Mordvins and the Ostiaks. There was a 'Frost woman' as well as a 'Frost man' to whom sacrifices were made. It was the custom among the Mordvins (who live in the district lying between Nizhni Novgorod and Saratov, and who in Byzantine times scored many victories over the Russians) to place porridge for the 'Frost man' in the smoke outlet of their huts on the Thursday before Easter, in order to protect the spring sowings, for although the Mordvins had accepted baptism, they still clung to their ancient mythology and to many pagan beliefs and practices. The Lapps also paid

In central Europe, ice in winter was connected with good crops the following year

great respect to the 'Frost man', who was more like a god than a man, as he was believed to govern the weather, the snow and the ice, and sacrifices were offered to him so that 'the ice should not harm the reindeer and that the blizzard should cease'.

But frost is not the monopoly of the northern hemisphere. A tribe of Australian aborigines have the following myth about the origin of frost. The seven Pleiades (called by them the Meamei) once lived on earth as seven sisters, whose bodies sparkled with beautiful icicles. Several brothers followed the girls about and tried to seduce them with gifts, but without success. A man stole two of the girls, but could not manage to thaw off the icicles. These two girls flew up to the sky, where they found their five sisters already waiting. Once every year, the sisters break off ice from themselves and throw it down to earth. Then members of this Australian tribe say, 'The Meamei have not forgotten us.'

Snow Maiden

In the mythology of sub-arctic peoples, ice is the original stuff out of which the world is made. Ymir the ice giant has been mentioned already. He is one of many such giants, the personification, perhaps, of icebergs. In the Eddas, the god Buri, grandfather of Odin, was licked into life from a block of ice by the magic cow Audhumla. A legend of the ice sea was recounted even in the western mountains of Czechoslovakia, which told of twelve ice giants, enemies of the sun. It is these giants, says the legend, that cause eclipses of the sun. The ice wolf, who threatens both sun and moon with his baying, lives with these giants on an island in the ice sea.

In central Europe, ice in winter was connected with good crops the following year, if it came in the period between Christmas and Twelfth Night. Smooth ice in March was taken as a sign that fruit would be plentiful in some places, while elsewhere it was taken to mean the opposite. Long icicles indicated that the flax would grow long in the following year, and again, their appearance in the days following Christmas was especially important. Sometimes the appearance and the time of formation of icicles was taken as a guide as to the best time to sow. If icicles were forked, the flax would also be forked.

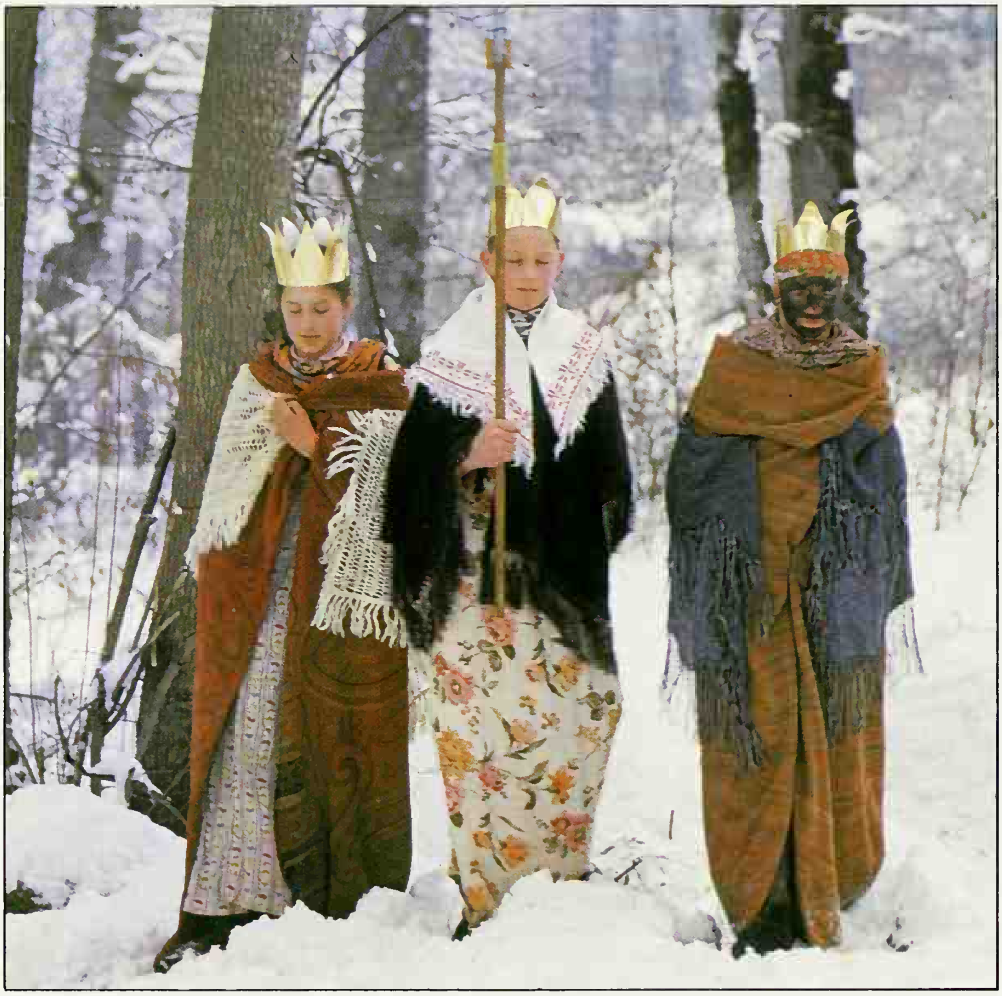
Snow is personified in the myths and folktales of many peoples. In Japanese lore, Yuki-onne, the snow woman, is a young woman with a ghastly white complexion, with a slim figure, and a gentle and alluring manner. She appears to any wayfarer caught in a snowstorm and exhausted in the struggle. She soothes him and lulls him to sleep, until he loses consciousness and dies. Sometimes, it is said, she incarnates herself as a beautiful woman and marries a mortal, but she kills her unlucky husband.

Other people picture snow, in personified form, as a man. In Nordic mythology, Snow is an aged king of cold Finland, with the name Snaer, 'the old man'. His father is Iceberg or Frost, and his three daughters are Thick Snow, Snowstorm and Fine Snow. Snaer is 300 years old, and when people wish one another a long life, they say, 'May you live as long as Snaer.'

Snow is not always personified as a powerful or fearful figure. A Russian folk song tells of an elderly childless couple who made a snow doll in their garden, which a passing stranger blessed, whereupon it became a living child. The blue-eyed, golden-haired little girl was very precocious – she was like a child of 14 by the time winter had passed. As the snow melted from the fields in spring, little Snow child avoided the sun, in which she wilted, and sought out the shade of the willow trees. Most of all, she liked heavy showers, and if there was a hailstorm she was as gay as if she had found a treasure trove. But on St John the Baptist's day (24 June) her friends took her on an outing. They were careful to keep her in the shade of the forest, but when night came, they lit a bonfire and leapt back and forth across it. Suddenly they heard a dreadful noise behind them. They could see nothing when they turned to look, but Snow child had disappeared, and though they looked for her for several days, combing the forest tree by tree, they could find no trace of their little pale companion. The old couple were inconsolable, and imagined that a cruel beast had carried Snow child off. But, says the song, it was not a beast. When Snow child followed her friends over the glowing embers, she turned into fine vapour, and rose as a cloudlet to heaven.

It would be possible to read a symbolic meaning into this apparently very simple story. The Snow child, sweet and innocent

Private Collection/Hamlyn Group Library



Erich Lessing/Magnum

A feature of Greek and Roman winter festivals, the custom of giving gifts has been perpetuated in the Christian counterpart of these celebrations; according to legend, the Three Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant Jesus. Village schoolchildren dressed as the Magi walk through a snow laden forest in Austria to announce the birth of Christ to people living on nearby farms

as she is, represents the cruel winter, but for all the care she takes to avoid the sun, she is vanquished in the end. It is interesting that it is not the sun itself which melts her, but the bonfire which in pagan times was lit to celebrate the sun god at the height of his power, about the time of the summer solstice. With the triumph of Christianity, these pagan rites were transferred to the celebration of St John the Baptist (see also WHEEL), and in this Russian tale there may also be a barely conscious reference to the triumph of the Son over the powers of darkness, symbolized by the wintry phenomenon of snow.

(See also ALL HALLOWS' EVE; CHRISTMAS; NEW YEAR.)

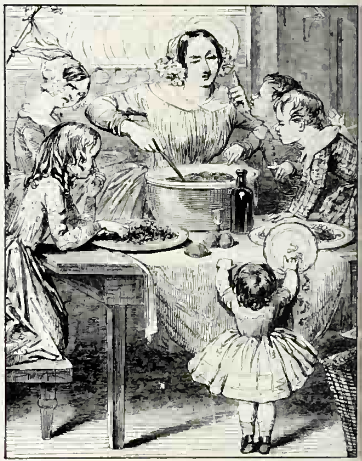
DAVID PHILLIPS

Wisdom Literature

General term for writings of the ancient East concerned with practical rules of conduct or with philosophical wisdom; including the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, and the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha; in Proverbs, chapters 1 to 9, Wisdom is a personified female aspect of God.

Wish

Among numerous traditional occasions for making a wish which will come true are on seeing a chimney-sweep, a white horse, a loaded haywain coming towards you, or a horseshoe in the road, provided you spit; when putting on new clothes for the first time; on seeing a hare or the first star of evening; or on seeing the new moon, provided you turn your apron back to front.



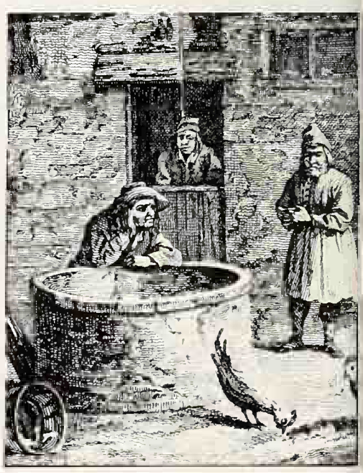
Wish-Bone

Or merrythought, the forked bone between a fowl's neck and breast; two people grip the bone and pull, while wishing, and the wish of the one who breaks off the larger piece will come true, provided he does not speak or laugh while the contest is going on, or reveal his wish.

Wishing-Well

A well at which you formulate an unspoken wish, dropping a coin, a pin or perhaps a pebble into the well as an offering; the belief that the wish will come true is part of the old lore of wells as the dwelling-places of powerful spirits.

See SPRINGS AND WELLS.



Although the epidemic character and the religious entanglement of European witch-beliefs make them different from the beliefs anthropologists have discovered among existing nonliterate tribes, there are still many points of parallel

WITCHCRAFT

IN MOST ENGLISH dictionaries 'witchcraft' and 'sorcery' are roughly synonymous. In anthropological usage they have acquired distinct meanings because an African tribe, the Azande (see AZANDE), are more precise in their categories of the supernatural than we are; and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, the anthropologist who studied them and wrote what has become a classic on the ethnography of witchcraft and similar belief systems, found the existence in English of these two words a useful means of translating the Zande distinction.

Witchcraft and sorcery are words referring to systems of belief centred on the idea that certain human beings in a community may harm their fellow men by supernatural means. According to the Zande usage now adopted by most of the anthropological profession, both witches and sorcerers are believed illegitimately to kill others or make them ill, to cause them to fall victim to accident or other misfortune, or to destroy their property. 'Both alike are enemies of men,' as Evans-Pritchard puts it.

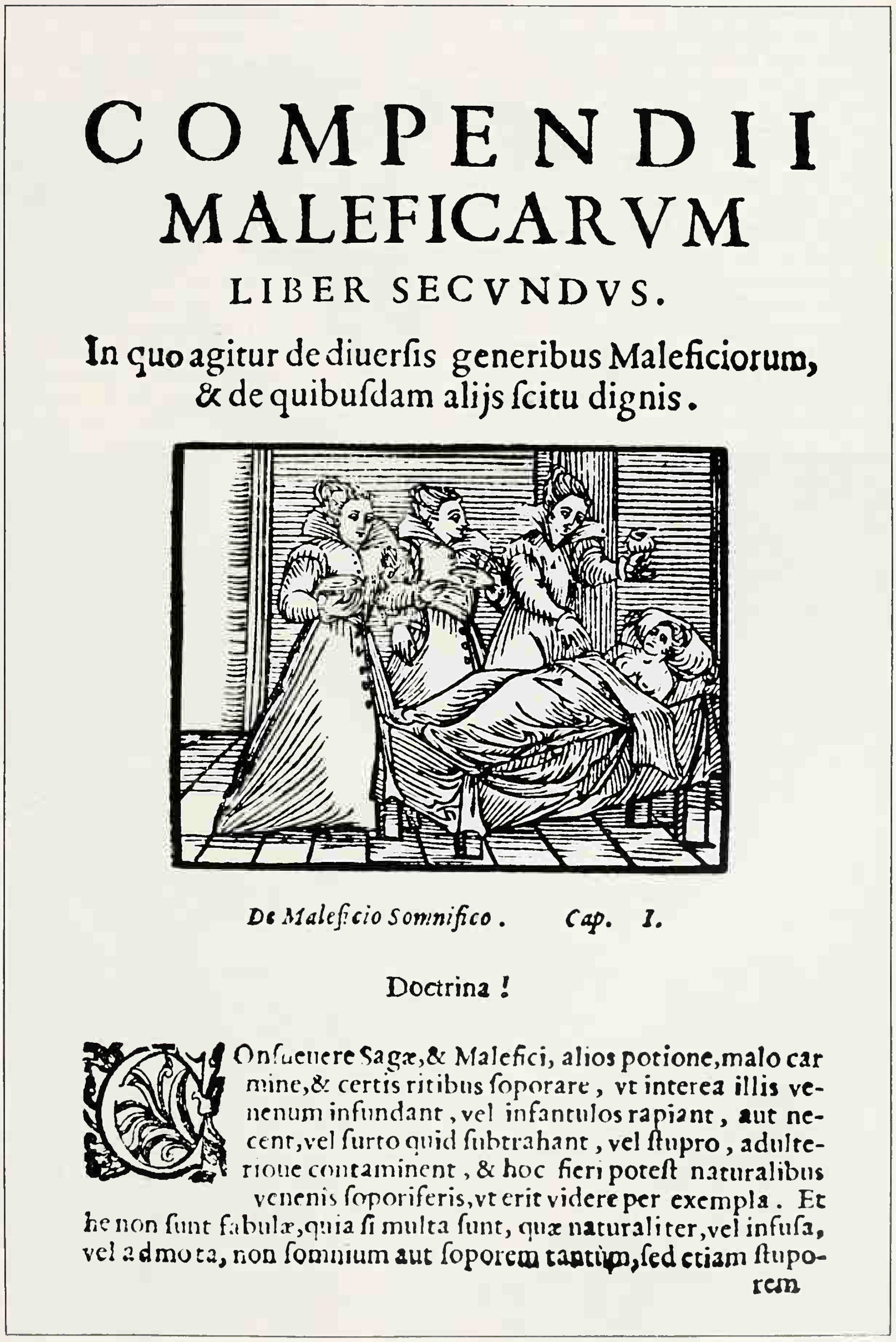
They differ, however, in method and motivation. The techniques of the witch are 'more supernatural' than those of the sorcerer in that they are beyond the comprehension of ordinary folk, whereas those of the sorcerer are acts of destructive magic that are well known and reasonably accessible to most adult members of the community. As to motive, witches are believed to be slaves of aberration and addiction; thus considered, they are weird, sometimes tragic characters. Sorcerers, on the other hand, are considered to be ordinary people driven by understandable, if disapproved, urges such as malice, envy or revenge, which are part of everyone's experience.

Powers and Spells

The propensity to be a witch is usually attributed to heredity or at least is considered constitutional, in the sense of having been implanted at an early age through mother's milk or, as among the Cewa of Central Africa, through a child's having been magically inoculated by a senior relative against the dermatitis believed to result from eating human flesh, an activity attributed to Cewa witches. Sorcery, on the other hand, usually demands no special personal attributes and is believed to be practised by anyone who can acquire the necessary magical substances (in Africa) or spells (in Oceania).

Most anthropologists see the advantage of agreement on the meanings of these terms as outlined; but there are some, particularly those writing on Oceania, who treat the term 'sorcery' as socially or morally neutral, using it for all forms of destructive magic regardless of whether it is socially approved – as it may be in property protection for instance – or considered illicit. Similarly, and this applies to historical studies of European witchcraft, the term 'witch' does not invariably have a sinister or evil connotation, especially if it is qualified by the adjective 'white', in which case it may be used in reference to those who cure people rather than kill them, or who help to find lost possessions rather than destroy them (see WHITE MAGIC). However, in most societies, more often than not, witches, like sorcerers, are believed to be agents of evil and misfortune.

The self-styled witches of modern society usually emphasize that they are not involved in any such antisocial practices as black magic or the casting of malevolent spells. This makes doubtful their inclusion in the anthropologist's definition of either sorcerer or witch. Their continued existence is as much a tribute to the inventive genius of Margaret Murray or of Gerald Gardner as it is to the strength of any continuing tradition (see MODERN WITCHCRAFT).



COMPENDII
MALEFICARVM
LIBER SECVNDVS.

In quo agitur de diuerſis generibus Maleficiorum, & de quibuſdam alijs ſcitu dignis.

De Maleficio Somnifico. Cap. I.

Doctrina!

COnſueuere Sagæ, & Malefici, alios potione, malo carmine, & certis ritibus ſoporare, vt interea illis venenum infundant, vel infantulos rapiant, aut necent, vel furto quid ſubtrahant, vel ſtupro, adulterioue contaminent, & hoc fieri poteſt naturalibus venenis ſoporiferis, vt erit videre per exempla. Et hæ non ſunt fabulæ, quia ſi multa ſunt, quæ naturaliter, vel infuſa, vel admota, non ſomnium aut ſoporem tantùm, ſed etiam ſtuporem

Symptoms of social strain, the witch-beliefs of 16th- and 17th-century Europe reflected a period of profound change, and became intertwined with the religious, economic and political conflicts that arose during the emergence of modern European society from feudalism; an early mistaken identification of witches and heretics resulted in the belief that witches are the earthly representatives of the Devil: title page of *Compendium Maleficarum*, a late 15th-century treatise on witchcraft

Colorific!

The Universal Witch

Beliefs in witchcraft (which from this point will be used in a generic sense to include sorcery) have been so widely observed that it has been suggested that the more important elements were probably common to Paleolithic man and spread with him to most of the presently inhabited parts of the world. There are certainly close resemblances between the beliefs in witchcraft revealed by the studies of modern anthropologists and those shown, by historical and literary sources, to have been characteristic of classical and medieval Europe. As Philip Mayer remarks, 'Shakespeare, writing in 17th-century England about mediaeval Scottish witches, makes them recite a list of creatures that would be just as appropriate to witches in primitive Africa. Or again: the Pueblo Indians in Mexico say that witches go round at night carrying lights that alternately flare up and die down; exactly the same thing was said to me in Western Kenya by the Bantu tribe among whom I worked.' One might add that these widely dispersed elements would also have been familiar to Lucius Apuleius, author of *The Golden Ass*, a useful source for witch-beliefs in classical times.

Many of the works on European witchcraft, dealing with the early modern period, are concerned with a phenomenon very different from the witch-beliefs of surviving primitive societies or those of classical or medieval Europe. In the Dark Age, as Trevor-Roper puts it, 'there were witch beliefs, of course – a scattered folklore of peasant superstitions, the casting of spells, the making of storms, converse with spirits, sympathetic magic... but on the whole the mediaeval Church succeeded in containing them.' But the 16th and 17th centuries saw so great an upsurge in Europeans' preoccupation with witch-beliefs, with the craze encouraged 'by the cultivated Popes of the Renaissance, by the great Protestant Reformers, by the saints of the Counter-Reformation, by the scholars, lawyers and churchmen of an enlightened age', that Trevor-Roper is led to summarize: 'If these two centuries were the age of light, we have to admit that, in one respect at least, the Dark Age was more civilized.'

Eric Cross

Servants of Satan

This means that the witch-beliefs of primitive peoples and those of early modern Europeans are in many ways not comparable. The first represent a chronic state, active but kept unremarkable by a society's normal mechanisms of tension management. The second reflect times of profound change when witch-beliefs, as sensitive symptoms of social strain, became intermingled with the religious, political and economic conflicts that punctuated the very rapid emergence of modern European society from feudalism.

For this reason the events relating to witchcraft in early modern Europe might more appropriately be compared with the cult movements which, since the second half of the 19th century, have been reported from virtually every part of the world where native peoples have had to adjust themselves suddenly to the advent of Western ways of life. Just as the cargo cults of Melanesia, the ghost dance and peyote movements of North America and the anti-witchcraft crazes of Central Africa represent, as Worsley has put it, 'desperate searchings for more and more effective ways of understanding and modifying' a confused environment, so may the witch scares of Europe and of Old and New England have played a similar role in blasting away the creaking and groaning remnants of an outdated social structure (see CARGO CULTS; GHOST DANCE; PEYOTE CULTS).

The most important respect in which the epidemic character of European witch beliefs made them differ from those of non-literate societies was the fact that they were taken up in the conflicts of the late medieval Church, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. An early mistaken identification of witches with heretics had the effect of marshalling a pre-Christian moral indignation against those who failed to conform with official Christianity. This fact probably prompted Margaret Murray's now discredited theory that European witches were the lingering adherents of a pagan religion. However, it also accounts for the fact that, whereas in all societies witches personify evil, in the society of early modern Europe they did this in a very specific way, being regarded as the earthly representatives of the Prince of Evil. In the course of time the chief criterion for identifying a witch in Europe or New England came to be whether he or she had made a compact with the Devil. Evidence of such a compact included the presence of a 'Devil's mark' on his or her body (see PACT; PRICKING).

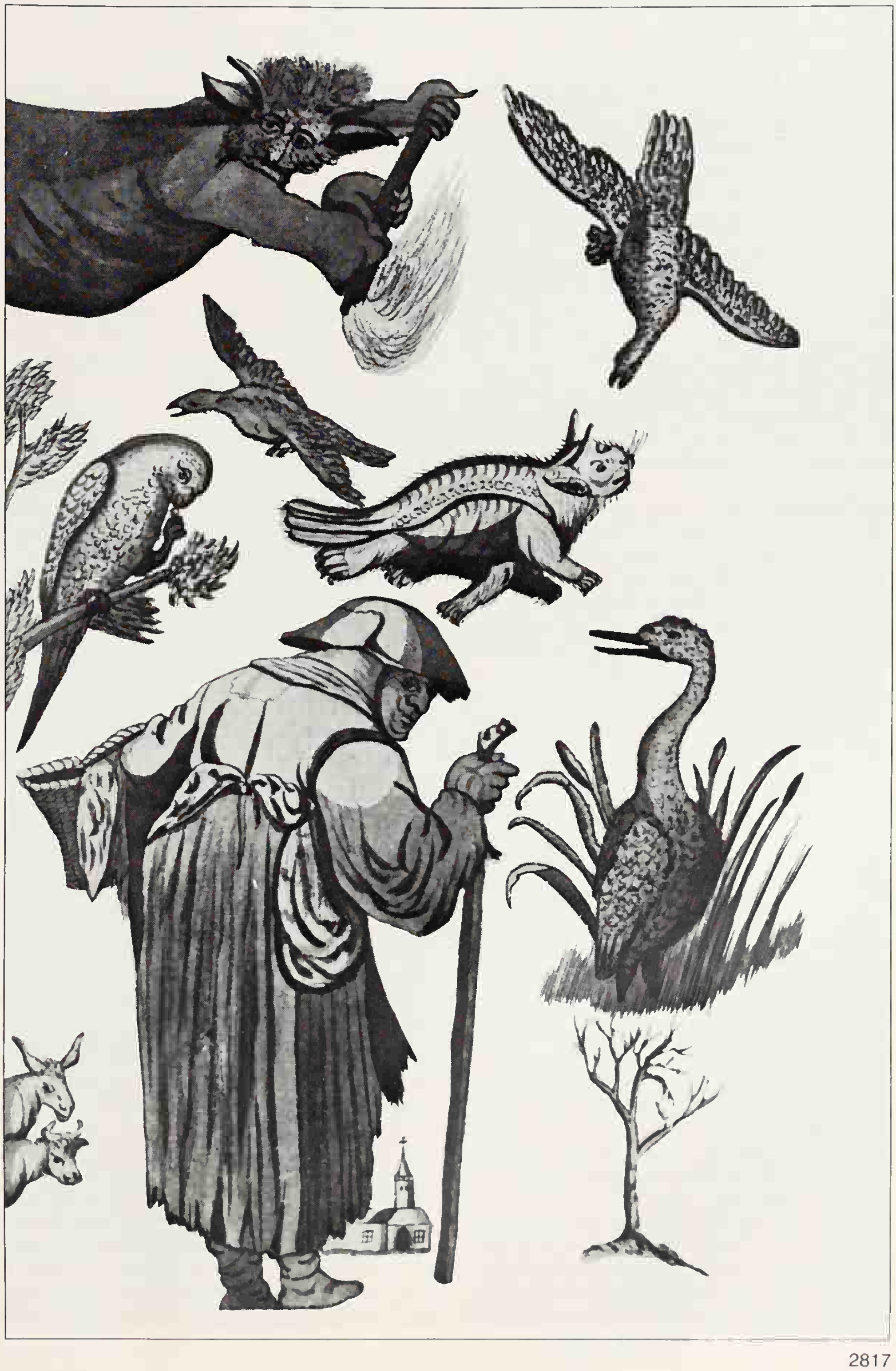
Witches were often accused of appearing in spectral form to tempt and torment their believed victims. In the Salem trials in New England in 1692, the screaming teenage girls, who were the main witnesses for the prosecution, regularly claimed to see – in the very courtroom – the spectres of the accused (see SALEM WITCHES). The idea that the Devil could not use the spectral counterparts of people without their connivance was an important principle in establishing the guilt of the accused. It was sufficient for an accuser to state that he had seen the accused witch's spectre; and it was only when theological opinion questioned this principle that the rate of conviction by the courts declined.

The Hoot of an Owl

Although the epidemic character and the religious entanglement of European witch-beliefs make them different from the beliefs anthropologists have discovered among existing non-literate tribes, there are still many points of parallel. The ethnography of witchcraft, the systematic description of this complex of beliefs in relation to the total way of life of the people or the period, has shown many similarities between societies separated in space and time.

Wherever beliefs in them are found, witches are conceived as having supernatural powers, antisocial tendencies and disgusting practices. They are believed to travel around at night by flying through the air on broomsticks (in Europe) or in saucer-shaped winnowing baskets (in Central Africa), or to move over the ground by riding on the backs of animal familiars such as baboons (in southern Africa). The range of animals and insects they are believed to induce to run their evil errands for them is wide, and includes dogs and cats in Europe and hyenas, owls, nightjars and red ants in Africa. In the Cewa language an owl's hoot is heard, not as a meaningless inanity such as 'To wit-to woo!', but as a clear and sinister *Muphe! Muphe! Nimkukute!* (Kill him! Kill him! That I may munch him!), and this inevitably links this weird bird with the necrophagous sorcerers who, the Cewa believe, bring them a large share of their misfortunes, such as illness, death and accident. Witches are usually credited with extra-sensory powers approaching omniscience, knowing by a sixth sense where a death has occurred and consequently where the next ghoulish feast will be held.

European beliefs reflect the medieval concern over sins of the flesh; for witches appeared to men as voluptuous succubi and to women as seducing incubi (see INCUBUS). A somewhat similar treatment of illicit sexual relationships occurs in the beliefs of the Pondo of south-eastern Africa: their beliefs seem to be related to the fact that custom excludes large categories of individuals living in the same neighbourhood from marrying or flirting with one another. The less sex-ridden but more food-conscious Nyakyusa of south-western Tanzania, on the other hand, consider witches as being motivated by greed rather than by lust.



British Museum

Some of the witchcraft beliefs found in classical and medieval Europe still exist today *Facing page* The custom of using a doll to kill or injure the person it represents was known in Greece and Rome, and is still widespread *Above right* A doll in a coffin, found in the 1960s by firemen in a house in London to which they were called *Above left* The figure of a naked woman, and a sheep's heart, both pierced by slivers of hawthorn, found at a castle in Norfolk in 1964 *Left* In primitive rituals curses are directed at an effigy of the intended victim *Right* A witch with her familiars: animals and insects associated with witches include hyenas, owls and red ants in Africa, as well as the creatures that are generally associated with European witchcraft

From one society to another, ideas vary regarding the relationships between witches and their familiars, whether these be spirits, mythical creatures or animals. Among the south-eastern Bantu-speaking tribes of Africa, including the Pondo, witches are believed to have sexual relationships with their familiars, particularly with a dwarf-like creature called *tokoloshe* or *tikoloshe*. Although familiars are usually regarded as the servants or the messengers of witches, they are sometimes believed to urge their masters and mistresses on, giving their aberrant addiction a more feasible, comprehensible and somewhat tragic character.

Even where no sexual relationship is postulated between witch and familiar, some kind of mystical link may be claimed. It was said of a reputed sorcerer among the Cewa that, when he had imbibed heavily, drunken hyenas were to be found in his house and that, when he died, his hyena-familiars died with him.

Attributed with special powers, witches are believed to be particularly difficult to bring to terms. Eternal vigilance and protective medicines have to be employed while they are at large and, once they have been caught, special methods of killing them have to be followed, such as burning them alive or driving stakes, pegs or nails into various parts of their bodies. Such practices, of widespread occurrence, are probably related to the belief that witches have special spirit helpers or that they possess elusive souls, though not all those who follow these procedures are explicit about their reasons for carrying them out.

Supernatural Terrorists

Owing to their supposed deviant and often revolting practices, witches are everywhere looked upon as beyond the pale of decent living. They provide moralists with shorthand concrete descriptions of evil and parents with effective bogymen. To accuse anyone of witchcraft is a condensed way of charging him with a long list of the foullest crimes, and this action throws into sharper relief the moral precepts of the society to which he belongs.

The fact that the witch is used to make children more circumspect about their conduct is no doubt related to the tendency in many societies for beliefs in witchcraft to provide plausible points of backward reference in the explanation of misfortune. If someone falls ill or has an accident, both he and his fellow men can usually find some incident in his prior social interaction which will explain why someone had reason to have a grudge against him and why he should now be the victim of witchcraft. He may have quarrelled with someone of dubious reputation, or he may have failed to discharge an obligation towards someone who, though in a superior moral position, is now believed to have resorted to an immoral form of retribution.

This leads to the paradox that, though witches provide mainly negative instances of conduct, they may also play positive moral roles in being the points of retrospective projection for the 'victim's' feelings of guilt resulting from acts of foolishness and meanness. This moral import of beliefs in witchcraft can be illustrated from all those societies, contemporary and historical, on which data on such beliefs exist, and this represents an important convergence of the findings of historians and anthropologists. Witches are unmitigated supernatural terrorists in all societies in which beliefs in them occur; and sufferers of misfortune find in the witches' supposed actions the means of expressing their feelings of guilt.

Another anthropological finding has been more difficult to substantiate from historical materials. It has been found that, in contemporary non-literate societies, accusations of witchcraft and believed instances of attack by witches occur typically between persons whom the social structure throws into uncontrolled competition and tension, for instance rivals in love or in politics. Accusations, which represent crises in the relationship between the alleged witch and the accuser, may thus be regarded as 'social strain-gauges', indicating where the tensions and role conflicts in the social structure lie. Believed instances of attack, involving the relationship between alleged witch and believed victim, have a similar significance but, since all witchcraft and most sorcery exist in the uneasy minds of their believed victims, they are on a different plane of reality and illuminate the society's own model of strained social relationships rather than the anthropologist's.

These two models often differ from one another and either may differ from the accepted picture. For instance, people in most societies where beliefs in witchcraft exist usually claim that witches are almost invariably women; yet, if the anthropologist keeps a tally of actual instances of accusation or of believed attack, he is likely to discover that men, who are generally more socially involved and more in competition for positions of leadership, form a much higher proportion of those accused or suspected than informants' general statements would suggest. In our society, statements about women drivers are a parallel case.

Until recently the nature of the historical materials made it difficult to apply the 'social strain-gauge' hypothesis to European data. The historical sources that have been analysed have often not revealed enough specific information about the relationships between the important triad of accuser, accused witch and believed victim; nor have they always thrown light on the nature of the issues between them. However, with Macfarlane's recent meticulous combination of the latest techniques of English local history and the theoretical orientations of social anthropology in his study of witchcraft in Essex between 1560 and 1680, an ever closer convergence in this field is promised.

In any society that uses witchcraft as a regular explanatory principle, two features may be expected to be prominent. Firstly, there will be practices such as consulting diviners and oracles, and submitting suspects to ordeals (see FINDING OF WITCHES). Secondly, prevailing thought processes will be closed, in the sense that misfortunes, witch-beliefs and the techniques of witchfinding form a circular sequence in which each case of misfortune that is attributed to witchcraft reinforces the belief in witchcraft and renders a sceptical escape from the sequence unlikely.

As yet we have no satisfactory explanation of how some societies, including our own, have broken from this closed circle and abandoned beliefs in witchcraft. Part of the answer seems to lie in the larger scale of modern societies with their related tendency to specialization, not only in economic processes, but also in human relationships, with some of the latter personal and others impersonal. Instead of having everyone in the community breathing intimately down our necks, we manage in our modern way of life to escape, even if momentarily, the prison of personal relationships, with their high potential for influence and control of our conduct, for love and hate, and, in general, for the ingredients of those delusions which in the right social setting become standardized and infuse the world with fellow humans wielding supernatural power. It is significant that, in most reports of accusations and believed instances of witchcraft, the main characters, like most of those involved in crimes of violence in even our impersonal society, have been intimately acquainted with one another.

An Open Society

Though modern people may have given up the more specific beliefs in witchcraft, they have retained many of its associated tendencies. They have not yet completely escaped from the charmed circle of taboos and magical beings that confines primitive peoples, and moved into an open society in which they have no qualms about adjusting their social institutions in the light of rational analysis. Some 20th-century movements have many of the characteristics of a 16th-century European or a contemporary primitive witch-scare. An accusation of political deviance may, like an accusation of witchcraft, prove an infallible means of destroying a reputation or a career. Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, which attacked Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist cult in the idiom of 17th-century Salem, brought out this parallel with brilliant insight.

(See also FAMILIARS; OLD AGE; SORCERY; and articles on European Witchcraft.)

M.G.MARWICK

FURTHER READING: Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1962); J. C. Baroja, *The World of Witches* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965); C. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion* (Basil Blackwell, 1984); A. D. J. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (Harper & Row, 1970); M. G. Marwick, *Sorcery in its Social Setting: a Study of the Northern Rhodesian Cewa* (Humanities, 1965); R. H. Robbins, *Witchcraft* (Kraus Intl., 1978); John Middleton and E. H. Winter ed, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (Praeger, 1963); H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (Harper and Row, 1967) and *The European Witch Craze* (Harper & Row, 1969).

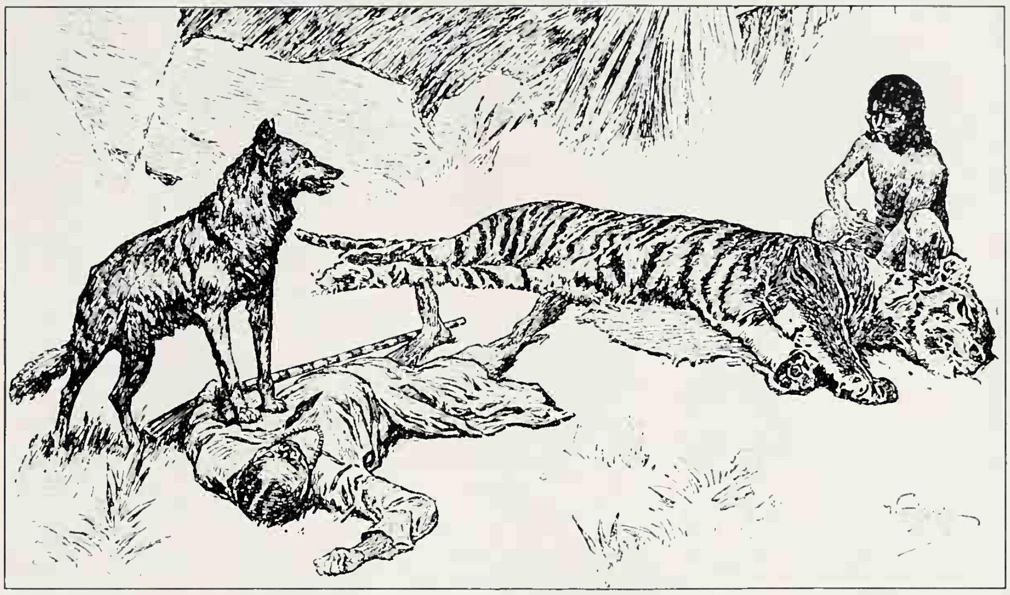
WOLF

FEW EUROPEAN MAMMALS equal or surpass the wolf in the richness of its folklore, though in the British Isles wolf lore is much scantier than on the Continent, where in some mountainous forested regions the animals are still to be found. By the mid-13th century there can have been few wolves left in England but not until the 18th were the last wolves killed in Ireland and Scotland.

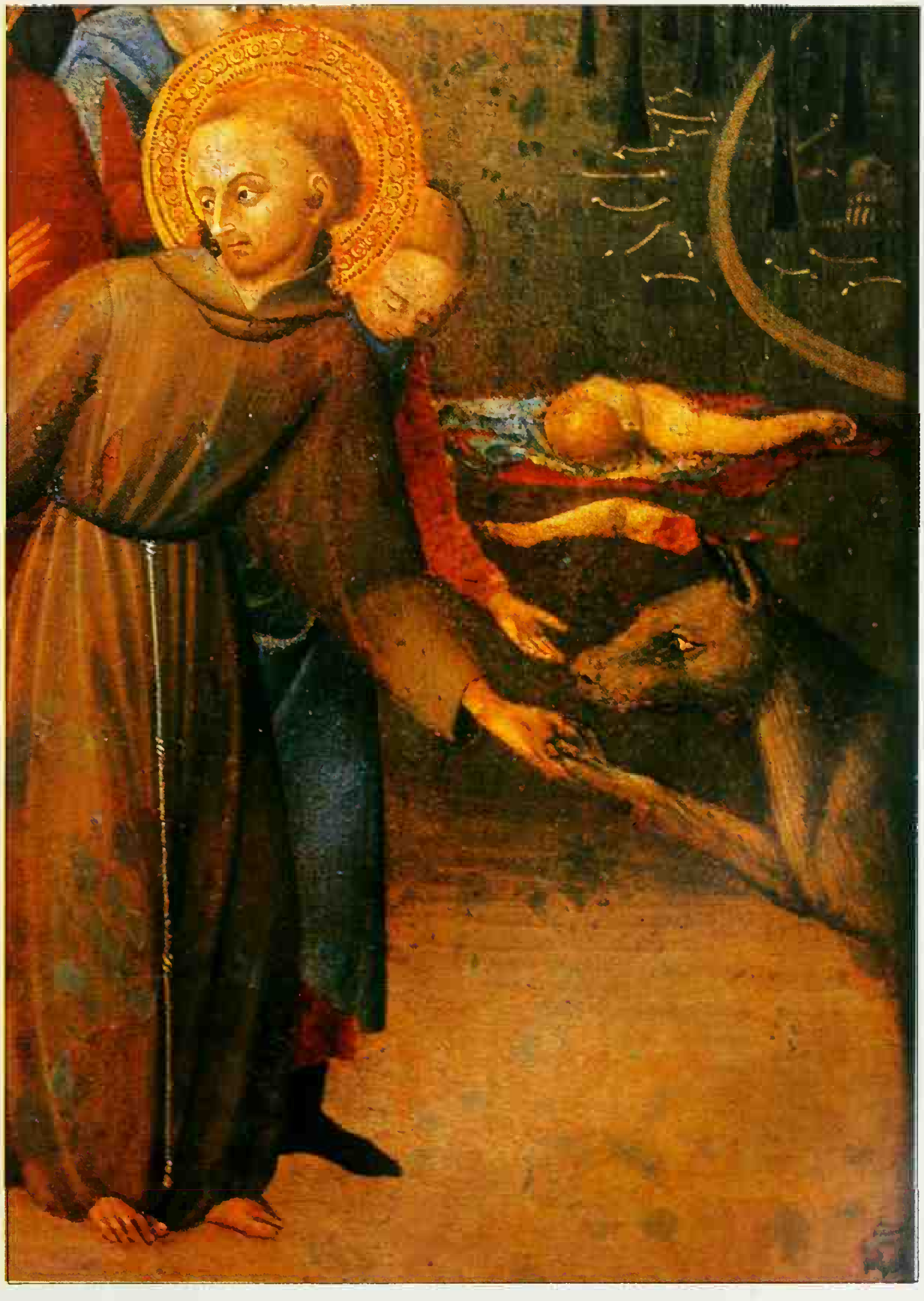
Much European wolf lore is pervaded by a fearsome awe, less apparent in North American wolf traditions. But although fear of wolves is a natural human reaction, the friendly wolf appears fairly frequently in myths and legends, indicating that the animal awakens ambivalent responses. The *Rig-Veda* tells of Rijrasva, whom his father blinded because with misplaced generosity he gave 101 sheep to a bitch wolf: the wolf prayed for her benefactor, to the Asvins, benevolent deities, and they restored his sight. On the other hand, according to ancient Iranian doctrines the wolf was created by the evil spirit Ahriman (see AHRIMAN). A similar belief is still current among the Voguls of Siberia.

The associations of Greek gods and goddesses with wolves hint at older traditions beneath the mythology of the anthropomorphic divinities. It was said that the priest of Zeus could take the form of a wolf. Hecate could also take wolf shape (see HECATE). Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, appeared as a she-wolf and a wolf was emblazoned on the shield of Artemis, the huntress. Apollo (see APOLLO) was said to have expelled wolves from Athens and any citizen who killed one had to bury it by public subscription. Sophocles called Apollo 'the wolf-slayer', yet a number of myths describe how his children by mortal girls were fostered by wolves. This motif of children tended by a she-wolf reappears in the story of Romulus and Remus (see FOUNDING OF ROME) and in later legends. Despite this myth of the kindly wolf the Romans associated the animal with Mars, the god of war.

In Scandinavian mythology the Fenris wolf is one of the three children of Loki, the others being the Midgard serpent and Hel (Death). Fenris, whose jaws stretched from heaven to earth, created much trouble among the gods until they managed to bind him with a magic cord. However, as the representative of Fate he bides his time, until at the end of the world he swallows up the sun (see SCANDINAVIA).

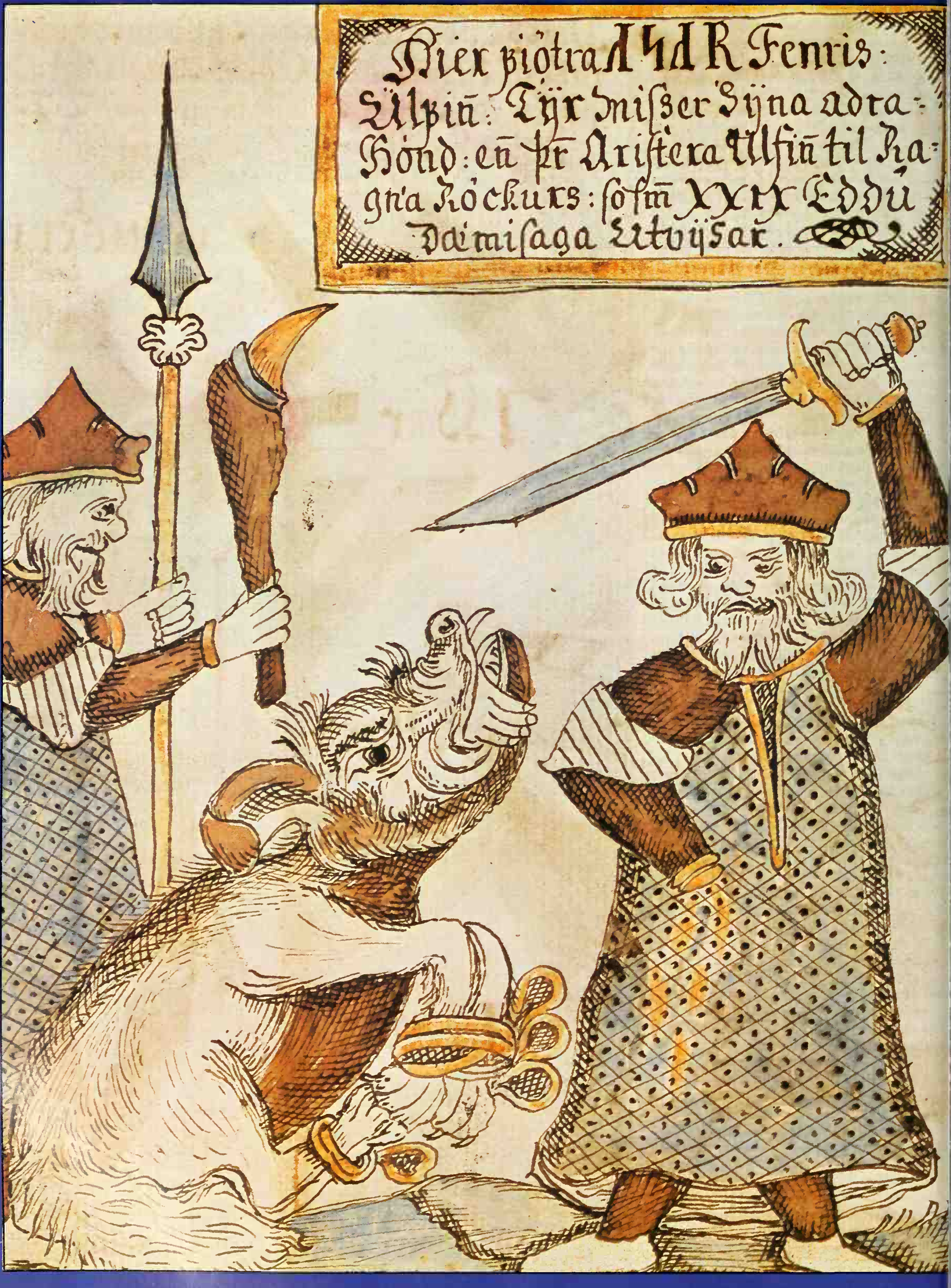


Victoria and Albert Museum/Mark Gerson



National Gallery

The friendly wolf appears fairly frequently in myths and legends, indicating that the animal awakens ambivalent responses' *Above right* Kipling draws on legends of human children reared by wolves, in his stories about an Indian boy who becomes a member of a wolf pack: Illustration to the *Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling *Right* A famous legend tells how St Francis of Assisi tamed the ferocious wolf of Gubbio: a painting by Sassetta shows the saint arbitrating between the citizens of Gubbio and the wolf


Hier þiötra ᛅᛋᛅR Fenris:
Ulþiñ: Týr misser sýna adra:
Hönd: eñ ꝑr Aristera Ulfiñ til ha:
gn'a Röckurs: so sm̄ XXIX Eddu
Dæmisaga Utvýsar.

he wolf was feared as an uncanny and evil reature, and credited with preternatural unning *Left* in Scandinavian legend the Fenris olf is a force of terror and destruction, brother death and the World Serpent: the god Tyr acrifices his hand in order to bind the Fenris Volf, in an illustration from an *Edda* MS
***ight* The wolf seizes Little Red Riding Hood, fter tricking her into climbing into bed with im: illustration from a 19th century children's ook**

The wolf has innumerable associations ith the Devil, especially in Germany. ccording to one saying the Devil squats etween the beast's eyes, according to nother he appears as a black wolf. A legend lates that the Devil made the wolf out of ixed constituents – his head from a ump of wood, his heart from stone, his reast from roots, and so forth. The Devil f the witches sometimes took wolf shape. he cross drives away all such diabolical pine apparitions, and although great rocity is attributed to the animal it is said have been cowardly ever since Christ ruck it with his staff.

Because wolves were seen on battlefields eding on corpses, the animals were trans- rmed by imagination into sinister super- atural creatures. They were thought of as rpse demons, connected with Odin (see DIN) and the fierce Norns or Fates. In ormandy horrible spirits disguised as olves were said to haunt cemeteries in rder to devour corpses. In Finland it was id that unbaptized children wandered round in the shape of wolves.

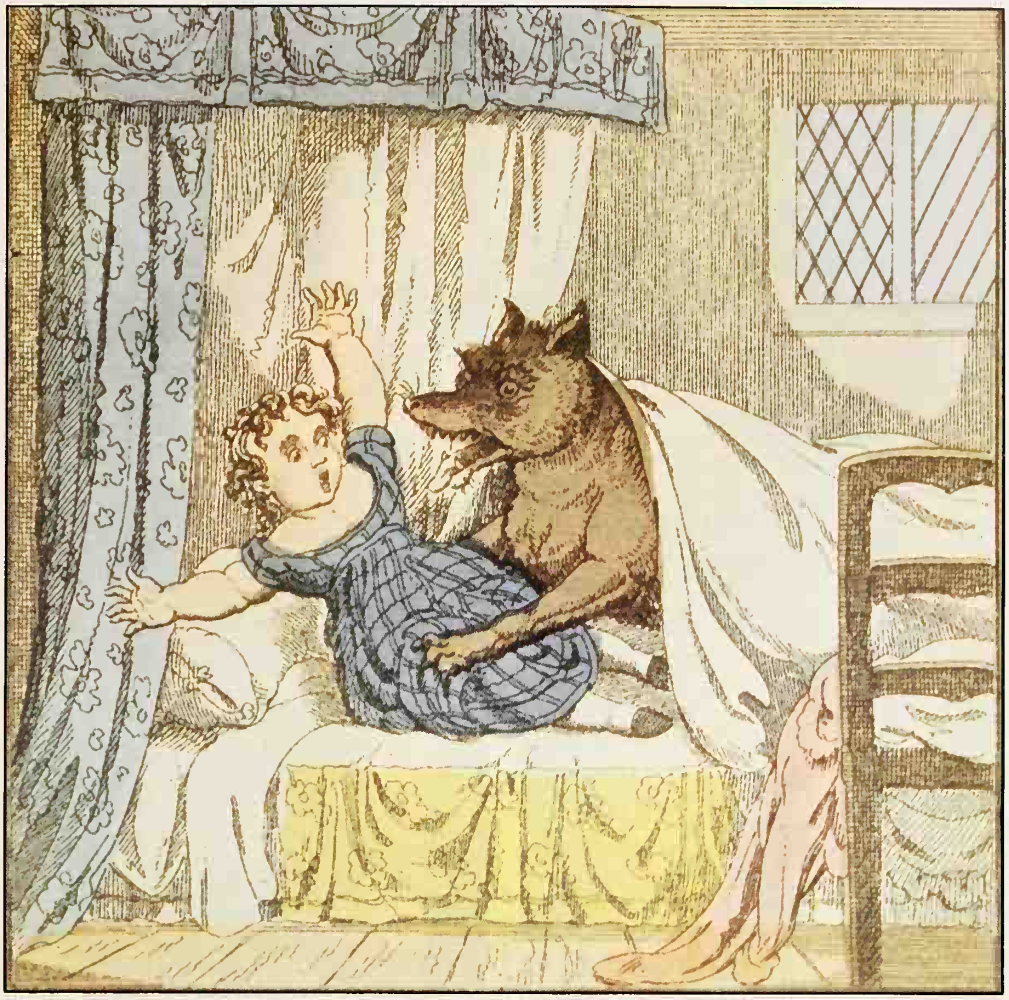
n Sheep's Clothing

Volves have ancient associations with itchcraft. The Latin term of opprobrium *pula* (little wolf) signifies 'witch'. Thessa- an witches were said to howl like wolves nd to use portions of the animals in their harms, as Shakespeare recalled when he ncluded a wolf's tooth in the witches' brew *Macbeth*. On the Continent gypsies ould say on hearing a wolf howling, 'Take are, it may be a witch.' In Germany witches ere said to ride wolves and in Lorraine he 'witch-master' turned into a wolf to o to the witches' sabbath. It was also hought that witches could transform them- elves and other people into wolves. A priest ho was turned into a wolf remained dentifiable by his white collar. In the 17th entury men and women were hanged for avages believed to have been committed by hem as wolves, although a century earlier Reginald Scot in his *Discoverie of Witch- raft* had ridiculed such ideas. The Navaho nd other American Indians believe that a an disguised as a wolf goes around ractising witchcraft.

The New Testament reference to false rophets as wolves dressed up in sheep's lothing (Matthew 7.15) embodies the elief that wolves are crafty as well as mali- ious, and the allusion served to perpetuate hese ideas. In a beast fable the crafty wolf ings Psalm 23, the Shepherd Psalm.

On the principle that evil combats evil nd what frightens a man also terrifies evil pirits, parts of wolves were used to scare such beings. A pierced wolf's tooth was sometimes worn as a protective charm, and a tooth placed under a pillow was thought to enable the dreamer to identify a robber. In Spain and Sicily a scrap of the animal's skin was believed to avert the Evil Eye, and in some localities was even thought to be effective in keeping flies out of the house. A wolf's hair placed in the rafters was a protection against fire and a wolf-bite made a person immune to witchcraft. According to an ancient tradition if a man came on a wolf and the wolf saw him first he would be struck dumb.

So prominent a place in the imagination of the people was occupied by the wolf that it entered into expressions describing the time of day and the weather. In France dusk is commonly described poetically as 'between the dog and the wolf' – the one being thought of as a creature of the day, the other as nocturnal. Elsewhere, when the wind whistles, 'the wolf sharpens his teeth', and a strong, destructive wind is 'the wolf'. If the sun shines when it is raining, it is 'the wolves' wedding'. Around Düsseldorf, when the sky is filled with woolly clouds they say, 'today little sheep, tomorrow wolves'.


Victoria & Albert Museum/Mark Gerson

The Wolf of Gubbio

The tradition of the kindly wolf appears in a number of Christian legends. Sculptures in some churches illustrate the benevolent beast which kept guard over the head of the martyred St Edmund. Probably the best known of such legends is the story of St Francis of Assisi and the wolf of Gubbio. The animal was so fierce that the citizens were afraid to venture forth from the little town. The saint reproved him and, bowing his head, he indicated that he would abandon his evil ways. He accompanied St Francis into Gubbio and henceforth lived amicably among the citizens. This legend is a version of a much older story. Friendships developed between Irish saints and wolves. St Maedoc provided a feast for a pack, while the blind St Hervé was led around by a wolf. In other tales we hear of a wolf killing an animal drawing a plough or waggon and being compelled by a saint to take the place of the dead beast. Thus the wolf legends in which saints are involved embody the ambivalence characteristic of much wolf folklore. The fierceness and the friendliness of the animal both tend to be exaggerated.

From the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* to medieval tales of wolves invading monasteries and devouring heretical monks, the wolf has been represented as much more dangerous to man than it is. It was, and still is, a menace to domestic animals, but there are hardly any authenticated accounts of a wolf attacking an able-bodied man. It is possible that during times of famine in the Middle Ages wolves broke into flimsy dwellings and seized children or invalids, but stories of packs pursuing travellers on sledges in Russian forests do not deserve credence. They are the inventions of myth-makers in comparatively recent times.
(See also WEREWOLF.)

E. A. ARMSTRONG

Keystone

Keystone

WOMAN

'Through women doth the Enemy lay siege to mortal men': the myth of the evil nature and inferiority of woman has grown out of social conditions, which in turn it has powerfully influenced

GODDESS, VICTIM, idol, plaything, mother, virgin, harlot, ministering angel, slut, enchantress, hag, 'better half' or 'weaker vessel' – woman plays all these roles in supernatural contexts, partly in reflection of man's frequently professed inability to understand her. Women, in male eyes, are supposed to be contrary and mysterious creatures, bewilderingly combining all sorts of opposite characteristics, as changeable as chameleons, and yet somehow vexingly in touch with reality through their intuition, a secret sympathy with the heart of things.

Among the most powerful strands in the web of the mythical female are that she is man's inferior and that she is essentially evil. In the Jewish, Christian and classical traditions, evil came into the world through woman. In many societies, including our own, women's bodies are hung about with a miasma of impurity and pollution which does not cling to men. In many parts of the world women do not eat with men, they walk a few paces behind their husbands as a sign of their inferiority, and they are often excluded altogether from important masculine activities, including religion.

Orthodox Hindus believe that women cannot attain salvation as women, but only through being reborn as men. Women are evil and unclean, and the virtuous Hindu woman, who must treat her husband as i he was a god, is considered inferior to the worst of men. In the West the more important religious roles have been reserved for men and denied to women until very recently, and women have invaded male preserves only against fiercely obstinate resistance. In religious and magical traditions which classify phenomena in terms of opposites, male is generally classed with good, positive, active, and female with evil, negative, passive. It is characteristic that one of the dictionary meanings of the word 'female' is 'epithet of various material and immaterial things denoting simplicity, inferiority, weakness, or the like'.

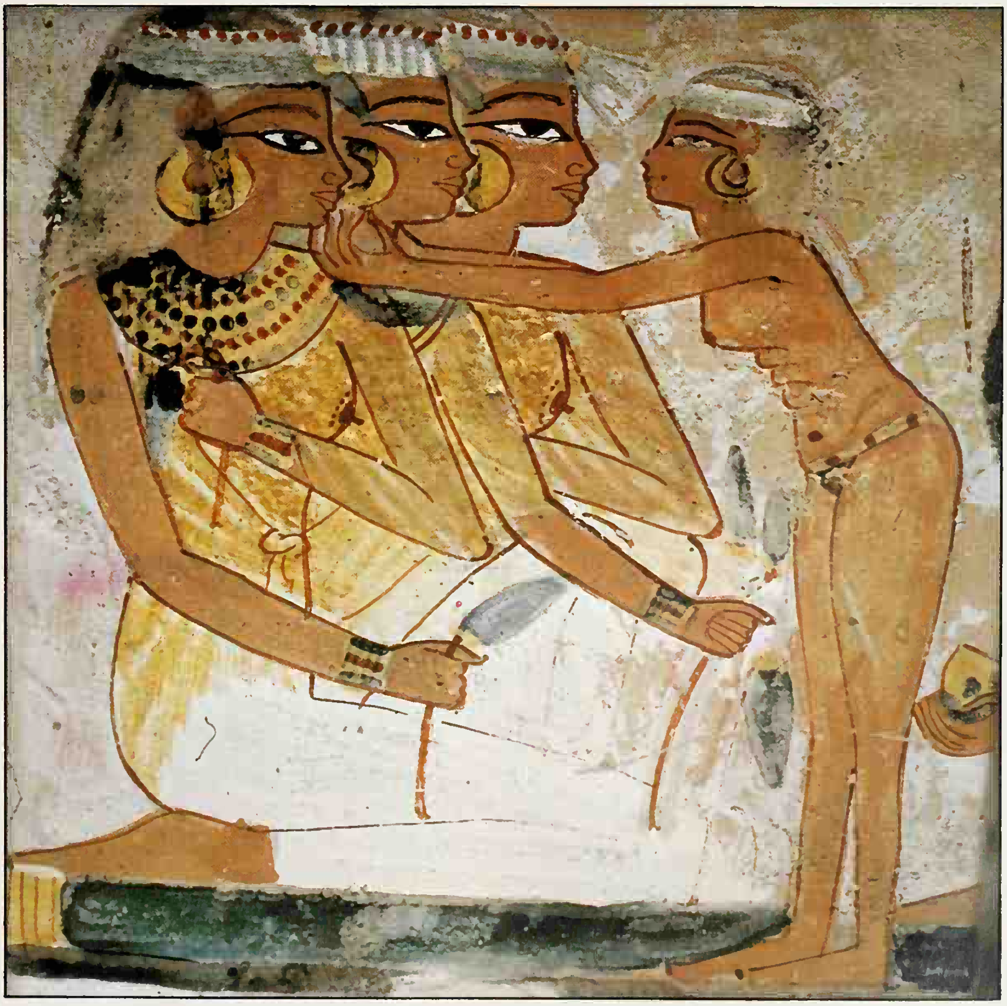
In male eyes, women are supposed to be contrary and mysterious creatures, as changeable as chameleons, and yet somehow in touch with reality through a secret sympathy with the heart of things

he Terrible Mother

ll this has the weight of hundreds of years f tradition and custom behind it: some omen welcome it, many accept it, and lmost all are brought up to behave in ccordance with it and so perpetuate it. ut how it began, how hatred, fear and ontempt came to be injected into the nage of woman – remembering that a hild's first love is his mother, that men and omen do fall in love and live happily ogether, and that what may be the oldest nown representation of a deity is a figure f a woman – is a question to which there is o certain answer. Psychoanalysts in earch of an answer have created new myths f their own, including those of penis envy nd the castration complex. Stated in a ery brief and over-simplified way, the eory is that the little girl, lacking a penis, els a sense of inferiority to males which asts her the rest of her life: and that the ttle boy fears losing his penis when he sees hat little girls have none, and fears that is father will castrate him because he is a ival for the affections of the mother, these ears mingling with desire in his attitude to omen, who become both love-objects and ate-objects.

It is true that the theme of castration ccurs in mythology and religious practice in the worship of Cybele, for instance – see YBELE; MUTILATION), and the motif of oman as castrator has enjoyed some terary popularity in the wake of Freud, ut it seems unlikely that fear of castration s really a crucial element in the myth of woman's evilness. A simpler approach sees the source of this myth in the difference between the sexes itself. Women are different from men, and tolerance of what is different is not a marked feature of human societies. When what is different and 'other' is also desired, it may be resented, hated and feared, as well as loved and idealized.

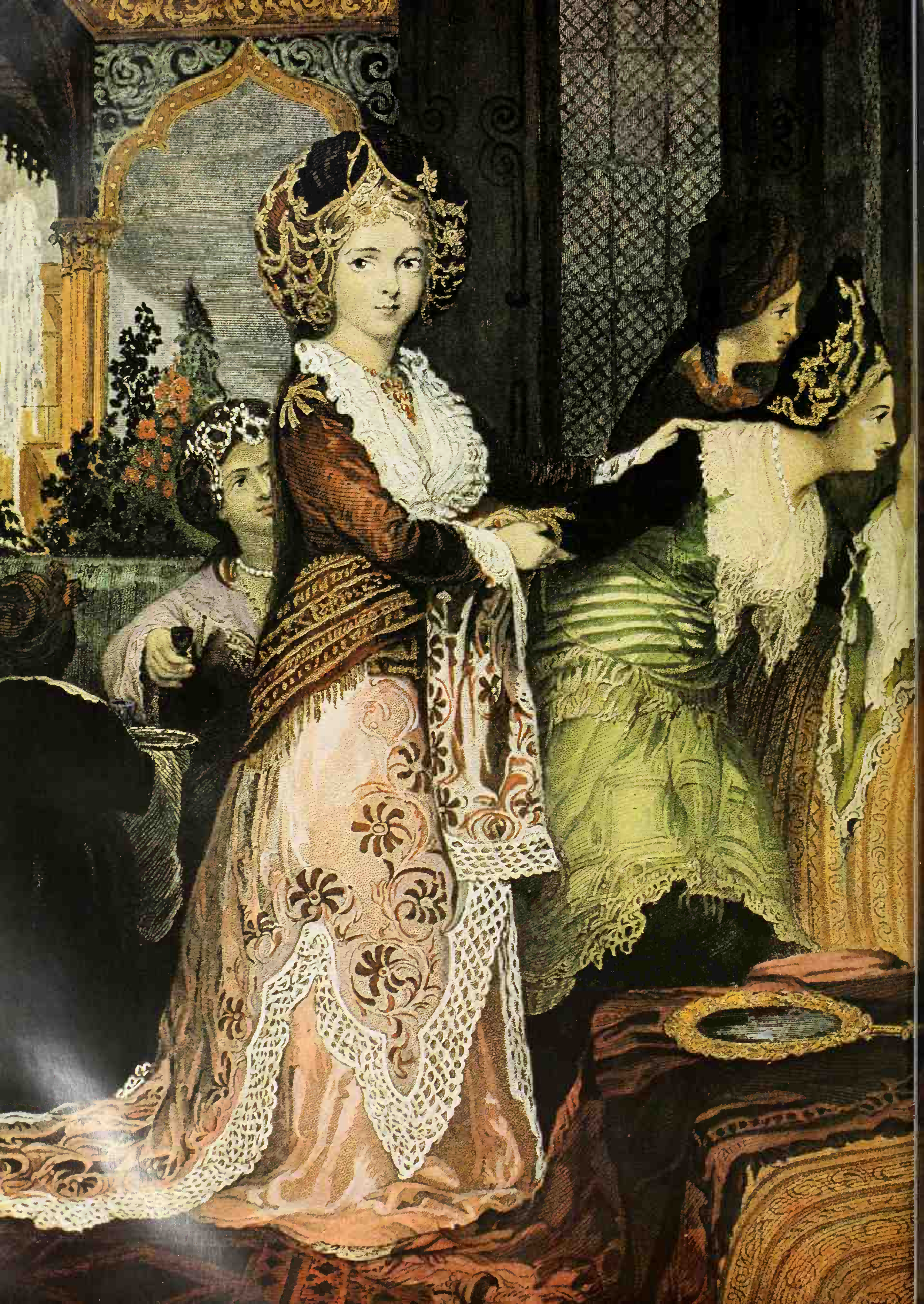
The fact that it is woman who bears and rears children means that it is first and foremost a child's mother who not only loves and protects him but also thwarts and punishes him. The twin experiences of mother's love and mother's rage seem to implant an ambivalent attitude to women in general, which is reflected in beliefs about the supernatural. For example, Spartan boys were flogged, or ritually 'punished', on the altar of Artemis Orthia, which had a fondness for human blood. In the Cabala the sefirah Din or Geburah, which represents the punishing judgement of God, is on the female pillar of the Tree of Life (see CABALA). In the Near East mother goddesses and love goddesses were also wrathful war goddesses. Kali, the goddess of terror in Hinduism, significantly presides over undeserved retribution as 'the Mother who nourishes but also punishes'. She typifies 'the deep-seated dread aroused by the unpredictable hazards of man's existence', which in terms of childish experience starts with the bewildering terror of the mother's anger. The age-old assertion that woman is fickle and changeable may have the same root.

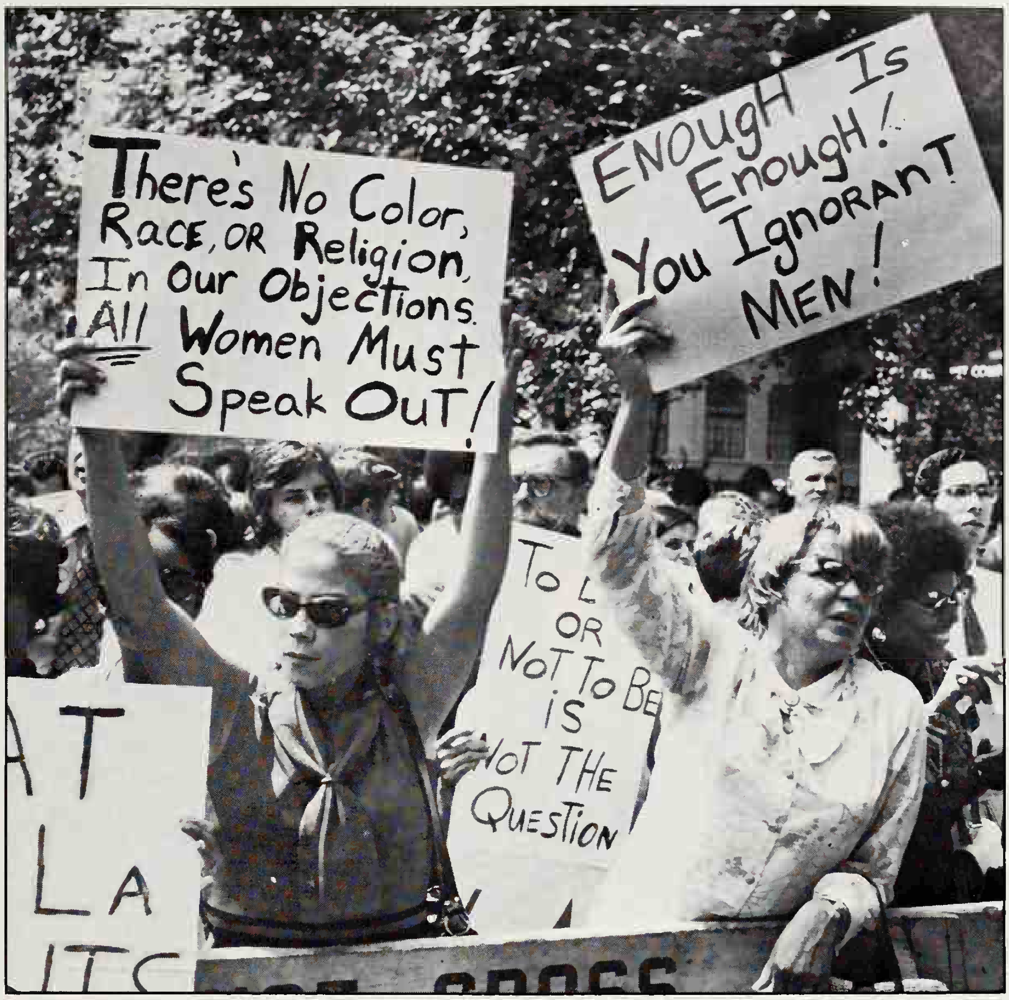


William MacQuitty

Voman's inferiority to man is one of the most owerful strands in the web of the mythical emale; the legend of Eve's subordination to dam, and the numerous representations of her n art as the acme of physical desirability, have ontributed to a stereotype described by Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* as being more body than soul, more soul than mind . . . he Sexual Object sought by all men, and by all omen'

Facing page, left to right Raquel Welch, Marilyn Monroe and Mae West, three 20th entury examples of 'the perfect woman' *Right* he concept of woman as a passive sexual bject or plaything classed on a level with wine nd song as a masculine diversion, is ancient nd widespread: wall painting in an Egyptian omb showing women at their toilet




There's No Color, Race, or Religion, In Our Objections. All Women Must Speak Out!
Enough Is Enough! You Ignorant Men!
To [illegible] or Not To Be is Not The Question

Paul Popper

he All-Devouring Curse

he supposed inferiority of woman follows om the fact that human societies have een dominated by men, presumably ecause men's greater physical strength has nabled them to dominate. The theory that arly societies passed through a stage of atriarchy, followed by patriarchy when en seized power from women and enslaved em, is now generally doubted (though ere are myths of the reign of women – see RAZIL) and even matrilineal societies, here descent is reckoned from the mother, re not usually woman-dominated.

Because women are physically weaker, it concluded that they must also be inferior entally and spiritually. A German neurogist named Paul Möbius published in 1907 book on *The Physiological Intellectual eebleness of Women* in which he pronounced at the regions of the brain 'necessary for piritual life' are 'less well developed in omen', and concluded that since women are entally inferior to men lying is 'the natural nd indispensable womanly weapon'. He hought it was for the best, since if woman uld compete with man in masculine fields er function as a mother would suffer.

Many attempts have been made, unuccessfully, to show that woman is biologially inferior to man, and the argument at the emancipation of women would reck home and family life, and the female haracter, is old and tenacious. But the ronouncements of Möbius pale into inignificance as a condemnation of woman eside the tirade in the Indian epic, the *Iahabharata*: 'Woman is an all-devouring urse. In her body the evil cycle of life begins fresh, born out of lust engendered by blood nd semen. Man emerges mixed with xcrement and water, fouled with the npurities of woman. A wise man will void the contaminating society of women as he would the touch of bodies infested with vermin.'

This diatribe contains two themes found elsewhere. The first is that when our earthly lives and our earthly bodies are condemned as evil and dangerous, distracting the mind from spiritual things and imprisoning us in ignorance and wrong, then sexual intercourse is considered evil, and so is woman, who tempts man to sex and from whose body yet more imprisoned spirits emerge to earthly life: though in other contexts, of course, woman as mother and fount of life is deified and revered (see EARTH; FERTILITY; ICONOGRAPHY; MOTHER GODDESS).

The second theme is that women are unclean. The fact that they bleed at regular intervals has aroused fear and disgust, especially when menstrual blood is regarded as the substance which should have formed the body of a child and as charged with potent and dangerous energy. Contact with this blood and with a menstruating woman has been widely feared as contaminating, and so has contact with a pregnant woman or with childbirth. If women are unclean, then they must be kept at a distance from men's fighting and hunting activities and equipment, and from religious ceremonies, because they might pollute them.

The Great Whore

Another physically-based reason for masculine fear of woman is that the male organ 'dies' in orgasm, and the emission of sperm has frequently been regarded as a loss to the male of some of his life-energy. H. R. Hays quotes an Australian aborigine as saying, 'The vagina is very hot, it is fire and each time the penis goes in, it dies.' The Roman poet Ovid used the same image in hoping to die making love: 'Let me go in the act of coming to Venus; in more senses than one let my last dying be done.' In *Paradise Lost*, when Adam and Eve make love after the Fall, Adam rises afterwards as Samson rose from Delilah's harlot lap, 'shorn of his strength'.

This motif combines with the fact that women are unlike men in being capable of sex at any time and able to go on longer, to create the myth of woman's insatiable lustfulness and to paint a picture of her as a voracious monster who ensnares a man to devour him, subjecting him to orgasmic 'deaths' until she destroys him.

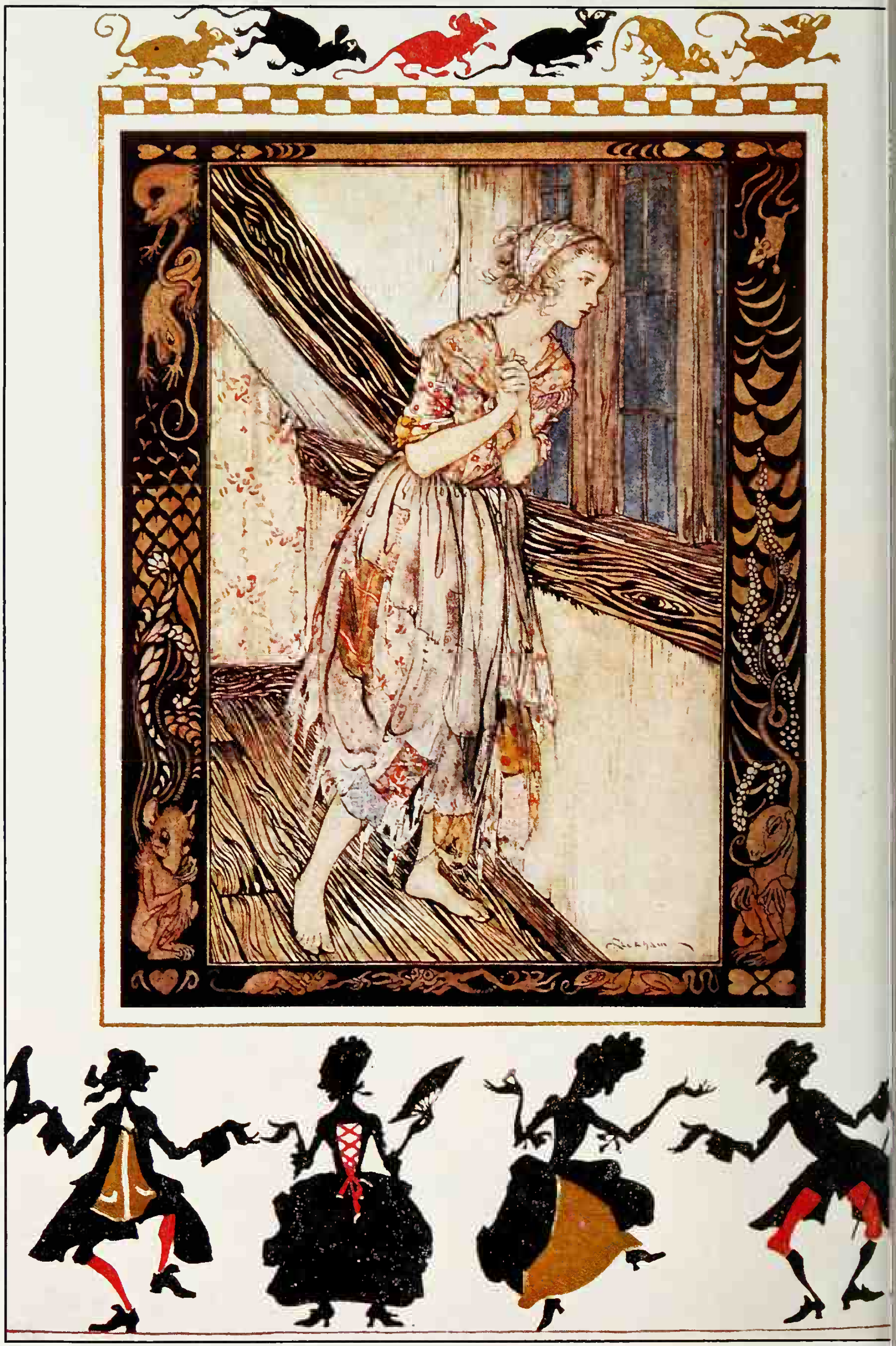
Greek men were horrified by the worship of Dionysus (see DIONYSUS), partly because it took women away from their 'proper place' in the home, but also because the frenzied rites unleashed all the murderous carnality felt to be inherent in the female nature. In later centuries people were similarly horrified by the cannibalism and orgiastic excesses of witches. It was once customary to refer to women as 'the sex', as though sensuality was a peculiarly female trait.

Jean de Meung, 13th century continuator of the *Roman de la Rose*, put it succinctly: 'Every woman is a whore.' In the book of Revelation (chapter 17) the personification of lust and murder is the great harlot who sits on a scarlet beast, arrayed in purple

lthough woman has been regarded as subrdinate to man in cultures throughout the vorld, sometimes excluded entirely from nasculine activities such as religion, modern vomen are rebelling against this traditional concept of their role; these two contrasting spects of woman are reflected in *The Favourite f the Harem*, a 19th century engraving by homas Hallom, coloured by Laura Lushington *left)* and members of the Women's Liberation novement at a rally in New York *(above right)*

Morris Newcombe

Previous page Although there are myths that tell of the reign of women, the theory that societies went through a stage of matriarchy before men seized power from women and enslaved them is generally doubted; in fact, woman's influence over man has generally been based on her sexual role. In *Lysistrata*, a comedy by the Greek writer Aristophanes, the women of Athens force the men to make peace with Sparta by going on a 'sex strike': scene from a modern Greek production of the play **Right** Woman's traditional reliance on man's goodwill is reflected in the story of Cinderella, who is finally rescued from a life of drudgery by a prince: *Cinderella*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham



and scarlet and jewels, holding a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication, drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs. The German writer Otto Weininger, who detested both women and Jews, published in 1903 a book called *Sex and Character*, which went through numerous editions, in which he maintained that women are monsters of devouring sexuality: 'Woman wants man sexually because she only succeeds in existing through her sensuality.'

The same stereotype, of woman as a being whose existence depends on draining the life from men, appears in the legends of Lilith, the lamias, the sirens, vampires and demonesses who prey on men sexually (see INCUBUS; LILITH; SIRENS; VAMPIRE). She appears again in modern novels, for instance as the Great Bitch in Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*, who 'delivers extermination to any bucko brave enough to take carnal knowledge of her', and in the fantasy characters, described by Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* as 'those extraordinary springing women with slanting eyes and swirling clouds of hair who prowl through thriller comics on the balls of their feet, wheeling suddenly upon the hero, talons unsheathed for the kill. Their mouths are large, curved and shining like scimitars: the musculature of their shoulders and thighs is incredible, their breasts like grenades, their waists encircled with steel belts as narrow as Cretan bull-dancers'.'

The great bitch or cat-woman, the seducer and slayer, is also related to the *femme fatale* or *la belle dame sans merci*, the enchantress for whom men feel an irresistible longing and who pitilessly enslaves and degrades them. She appears in Arthurian legends, she is Delilah, who robbed Samson of his strength and his freedom, or Cleopatra, 'who lost Mark Antony the world'. She is Wilde's Salome and the Dolores, 'Our Lady of Pain', of Swinburne's masochistic fancy.

The Jar of Evils

The *femme fatale* may herself be essentially passive: her loveliness by itself entraps men and destroys them, as in the case of Helen, whose beauty launched the thousand ships of the avenging Greeks and caused the fall of Troy. Another example is Pandora, whose story was told by Hesiod in his *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. Zeus determined to make men pay for the gift of fire, which Prometheus had stolen (see PROMETHEUS), and instructed the divine craftsman Hephaestus to manufacture a 'beautiful evil', a woman, made of soil mixed with water. The goddess Athene taught her to sew, golden Aphrodite 'shed grace upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs', and Hermes bestowed on her 'a shameless mind and a deceitful nature'.

Pandora was, in fact, a typical woman as seen by Hesiod, and Zeus presented her to Epimetheus, Prometheus's brother, who foolishly accepted the gift. She then raised the lid of a jar, which contained all evils, and the evils escaped and have been loose in the world ever since. Before this, Hesio says, 'men lived on earth remote and fre from ills and hard toil and heavy sicknesses . . . but the woman took off the grea lid of the jar with her hands and scattered al these and her thought caused sorrow an mischief to men.' All women are descende from her, 'the deadly race and tribe o women who live amongst mortal men t their great trouble', for Zeus 'made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature t do evil'.

Pandora's name may mean 'all-giving and was perhaps originally a title of th Earth Goddess. Her jar (*pithos*) was turne into a box (*pyxis*) by Erasmus, the 16th century humanist, and 'Pandora's box became a phrase for any source of multipl

Reflections on Woman

What man has assurance enough to pretend to know thoroughly the riddle of a woman's mind, and who could ever hope to fix her mutable nature?
Cervantes

From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die
Ecclesiasticus

Women are only children of a larger growth
Lord Chesterfield

The goal of female education has invariably to be the future mother
Hitler

There's nothing sooner dry than women's tears
Webster

Nature has given women so much power that the law has very wisely given them little
Dr Johnson

Dissimulation is innate in woman
Schopenhauer

What female heart can gold despise?
What cat's averse to fish?
Gray

The female of the species is more deadly than the male
Kipling

A woman is necessarily an evil, but he that gets the most tolerable one is lucky
Menander

Thou goest to women? Don't forget thy whip!
Nietzsche

Here lies my wife: here let her lie!
Now she's at rest, and so am I
Dryden

Here's to Woman! Would we could fall into her arms without falling into her hands
Ambrose Bierce

The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed slavery of the wife
Engels

Women have very little idea of how much men hate them
Germaine Greer

disasters. Early Christian writers likened her to Eve and the Renaissance rediscovered her, though usually not as the source of evil but as the 'all-gifted' one, on whom the gods had bestowed their many treasures. However, as Jean Olivier, the author of *Pandora* (1541), said: 'Eve in Scripture opened the forbidden fruit by her bite, by which death invaded the world. So did Pandora open the box in defiance of a divine injunction, whereby all the evils and infinite calamities broke loose and overwhelmed the hapless mortals with countless miseries...'

In the 18th century, the painter James Barry, who executed an enormous *Creation of Pandora*, called her story 'one of the most splendid of the many specimens of the Heathen manner of adumbrating and allegorizing that introduction of Evil or fall of mankind which is celebrated in Genesis'. Pandora's box was occasionally identified with her genitals, and Paul Klee's drawing of *Pandora's Box* (1920) brings in the menstruation motif, for it shows a goblet shaped like the female genitals, containing some flowers and emitting evil vapours.

The Devil's Gateway

The Jewish legend of the Watchers traces the introduction of evil into the world to the angels who descended from heaven, significantly drawn to earth by the sexual attractions of human women (see DEVIL), but the story of Adam and Eve has had a greater influence in the West in reinforcing the belief in woman's inherent wickedness. In the account in Genesis it is the woman who succumbs to the serpent's temptation and persuades Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, the action which caused the Fall and implanted the taint of original sin in all human beings (see EVIL; FIRST MAN). In some paintings of the scene, including Michelangelo's in the Sistine Chapel, the serpent itself is female.

Genesis also stresses the inferiority of woman. She is created after Adam, and fashioned from one of his ribs, and the pangs of childbirth and the subjection of woman to man are among the penalties for the crime, so providing divine authority for the actual situation in patriarchal Hebrew society. The story in Genesis may have been influenced by the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh (see GILGAMESH), in which Enkidu, the 'noble savage' who is man in his natural primitive state, is seduced by a temple prostitute. She teaches him the delights of sex, instructs him in civilized behaviour, lures him away from his peaceful life with the animals and takes him to the city, and so ultimately to his doom. When he is dying, Enkidu curses her for coaxing him away from his simple life in the wild.

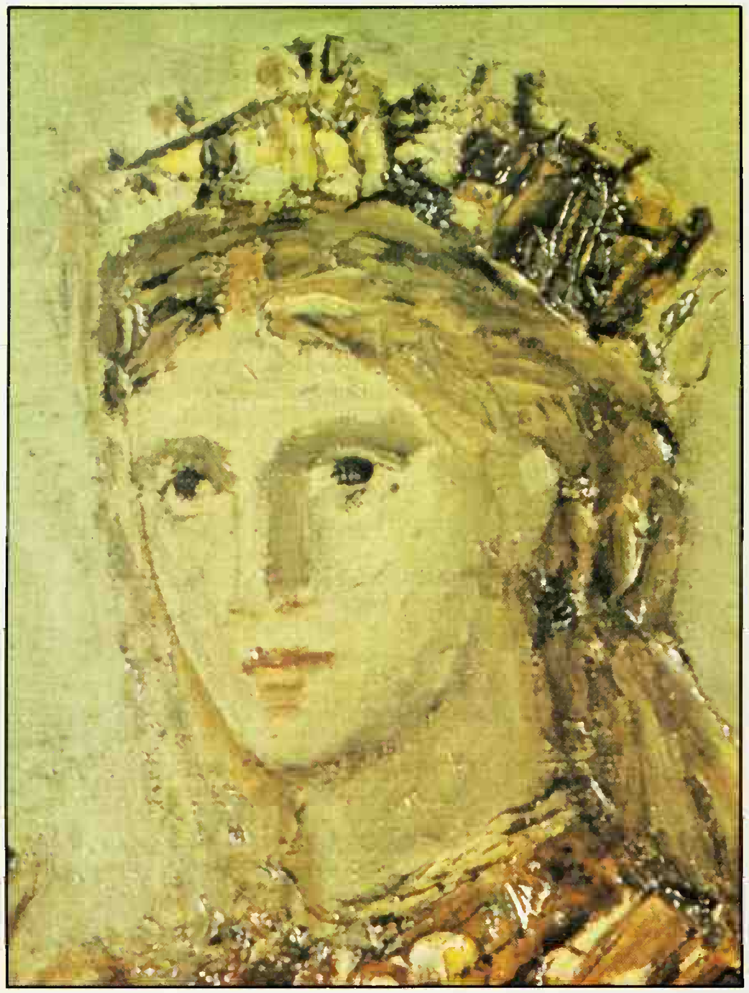
Eve, who coaxed Adam into eating the forbidden fruit of sexual and civilizing knowledge, entered the Christian tradition as the supreme example of woman as both intensely desirable and intensely dangerous. Tertullian (2nd century AD), who castigated women as Eves, Devil's gateways, destroyers of man and ultimately responsible for the death of Christ, said that they ought all to wear permanent mourning as a sign of penitence for the wickedness they derived from Eve. And Eve's creation from Adam's rib was for hundreds of years one of the stock arguments against the emancipation of women. There is a story about one of the desert hermits, the holy Arsenius, who was visited by a devout woman, a virgin, who went all the way from Rome to see him. Arsenius was furious and said, 'Dost thou not know that thou art a woman, and ought not to go anywhere? And wilt thou now go to Rome and say to the other women "I have seen Arsenius", and turn the sea into a high road of women coming to see me?' She asked him to pray for her but he said that on the contrary he would pray to God to wipe the memory of her from his mind. When she told the archbishop what had happened, he said, 'Knowest thou not that thou art a woman, and through women doth the Enemy lay siege to mortal men?'

It is not as easy to generalize about Christian attitudes to sex and woman as authors embattled in these particular lists have sometimes suggested. Few Christians went as far as a Church Council in 585 which ruled that a male corpse must not be buried beside a female corpse until the latter had decomposed. But though generally by no means as hostile to women as orthodox Hinduism or as appalled by sex as some of the European heretical sects, Christianity did contain a powerful strain of mistrust of sex and the body, as obstacles to spiritual advancement, which engendered disapproval of women as evil temptresses, and which lies behind the lauding of the virgin state as a condition closer to God than the married, the establishment of monasteries and nunneries, and the insistence on clerical celibacy.

The God of Jews and Christians is emphatically male and, unlike pagan gods, has no female consort (except in mystical imagery about the Shekhinah or Wisdom or the Sophia of the Gnostics, or the mystic himself, as God's bride). Jesus did not marry, and speculations about him being involved in a love affair with Mary Magdelene strike most Christians to this day as thoroughly offensive. The nearest thing to a goddess in Christianity is a virgin, though she has clearly brought into patriarchal Christianity a feminine element which multitudes of worshippers have refused to do without (see MARY).

The fact that St Paul, in the much discussed passages of 1 Corinthians (chapters 6 and 7), keeps insisting that it is not a sin to marry suggests that the Corinthian Christians thought it was. 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman,' he says, though conceding that many men, unlike himself, cannot refrain from touching one; and so, 'it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion'. St Paul was writing at a time when Christians expected the world to come to an end at any moment, and he advised people to stay as they were if they could, single or married, slave or free, 'for the appointed time has grown very short'. Later Christian writers continued to recommend virginity, not necessarily condemning marriage but regarding it as a second best, because involvement in things of the flesh distracts attention from the things of God. Sex was necessary for the procreation of children, and the Almighty for his own inscrutable reasons had instituted it for that purpose, but it was still something of a barrier between humanity and God.

Many Christian authors have disapproved of cosmetics and other feminine adornments because they excite men's passions, and much of the element of distrust of woman in Christianity stems from the observation that sex causes man to lose his self-control. This is part of the widespread human feeling that desire is supernatural, awesome and dangerous, sweeping over human beings from outside and carrying them away in an uncontrollable tide. Both St Albertus Magnus and St Thomas Aquinas



Giraudon

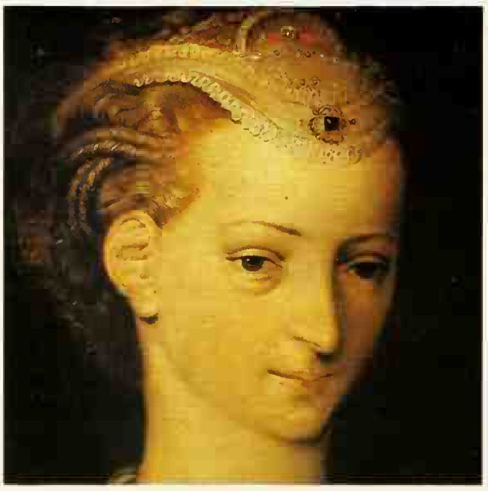
maintained that what is sinful in sexual intercourse is not the pleasure of the act but the fact that fallen man in his weakness cannot enjoy so intense a pleasure without losing sight of God. Earlier, St Augustine had also been horrified by the irrationality of erotic passion, the whirling away of reason and self-control in the hurricane of desire. He thought that what Adam and Eve really discovered, when their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked, was 'concupiscence' – desire which was beyond their control.

Wine, Women and Song

If at one end of the scale woman is whore, temptress, murderess, at the other she is a toy or doll, a passive sexual object and plaything, the occupant of a real or psychological harem, classed on a level with wine and song as masculine diversions. The legendary Eve's subordination to Adam, and the numerous representations of her in art as the acme of physical desirability, in styles varying with male tastes of different periods and places, have contributed to this stereotype, which is blisteringly described by Germaine Greer. 'She is more body than soul, more soul than mind . . . She is the Sexual Object sought by all men, and by all women. Her value is solely attested by the demand she excites in others. All she must contribute is her existence. She need achieve nothing, for she is the reward of achievement . . . Because she is the emblem of spending ability and the chief spender, she is also the most effective seller of this
world's goods. Every survey ever held ha
shown that the image of an attractive woma
is the most effective advertising gimmick.'

In legends of sirens and vampires woman is depicted as a being whose existence depends on draining the life from men; this stereotype is related to the enchantress for whom men feel an irresistible longing, a *femme fatale* who may in fact be essentially passive, and whose loveliness by itself entraps and destroys men *Above left* Helen's beauty caused the fall of Troy: *Helen on the Ramparts of Troy* by Moreau *Above right* Head of Nefertiti, wife of the heretic Pharaoh Ikhnaten *Below* Pandora, who raised the lid of a jar containing all evils and allowed them to escape to plague the world, has been described as a typical woman: *Pandora* by François Quesnel

***Facing page* Relief depicting an Egyptian queen, said to be Cleopatra who 'lost Mark Antony the world'**

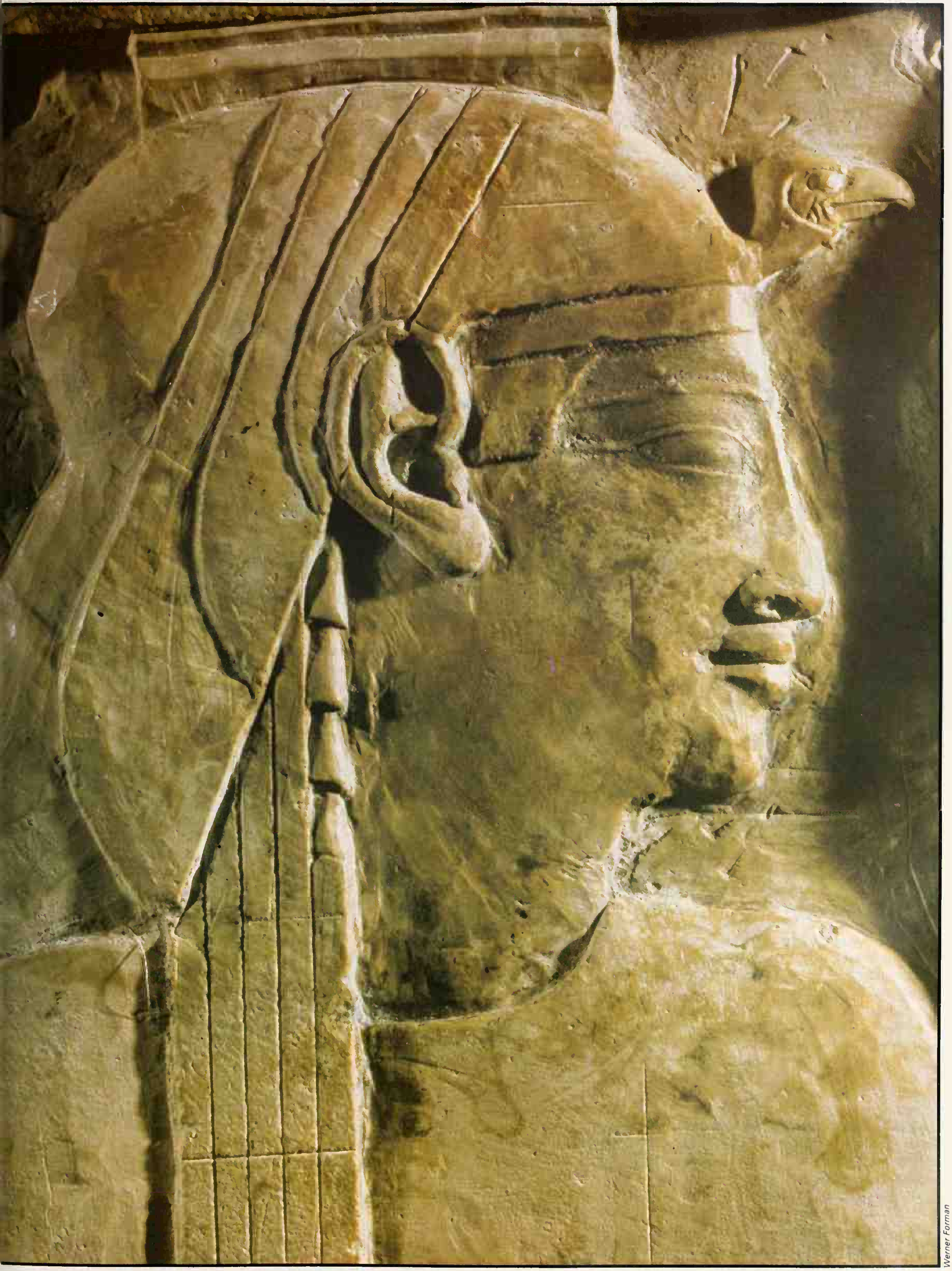


Corvina, Budapest

There is far more to Eve in Genesis, an
to woman in supernatural contexts generall
than evil and passive inferiority, but the not
of wickedness, darkness, danger and deat
does sound constantly. *Cherchez la femm*
men say, if there's trouble there's a woma
at the bottom of it. In *Paradise Lost* Milto
whose relations with women were not of th
happiest, depicts Sin sitting at the gate
hell. She is female, a beautiful woman to th
waist and a foul scaly serpent below, an
her womb is the kennel for demonic dog
Many of the mother goddesses of the dista
past were deities who gave life but who als
gave death, and their worshippers see
to have regarded them with the same mingle
emotions of love and terror, trust and fea
admiration and resentment, desire an
disgust, which men have blended in the
image of woman all through recorded histor
(See also AMAZONS; BIRTH; HYSTERICA
POSSESSION; MENSTRUATION; OLD AG
SELF-DENIAL; SEX; TANTRISM.)

RICHARD CAVENDIS

FURTHER READING: D. S. Bailey, *The Sexu*
Relation in Christian Thought (Harper a
Row, 1959); H. R. Hays, *The Dangerous S*
(Putnam, 1964); D. and E. Panofsky, *Pa*
dora's Box (Princeton Univ. Press, 2nd edn
1962); B. Walker, *Hindu World* (Praege
1968, 2 vols). See also G. Greer, *The Fema*
Eunuch (McGraw-Hill, 1980).



Werner Forman

Feminism, the women's movement and a wealth of New Age ideas have inspired a new emphasis on feminine spirituality which has seen women ordained as Christian priests and the pagan and prehistoric Great Goddess restored to her age-old throne

WOMEN'S MYSTERIES

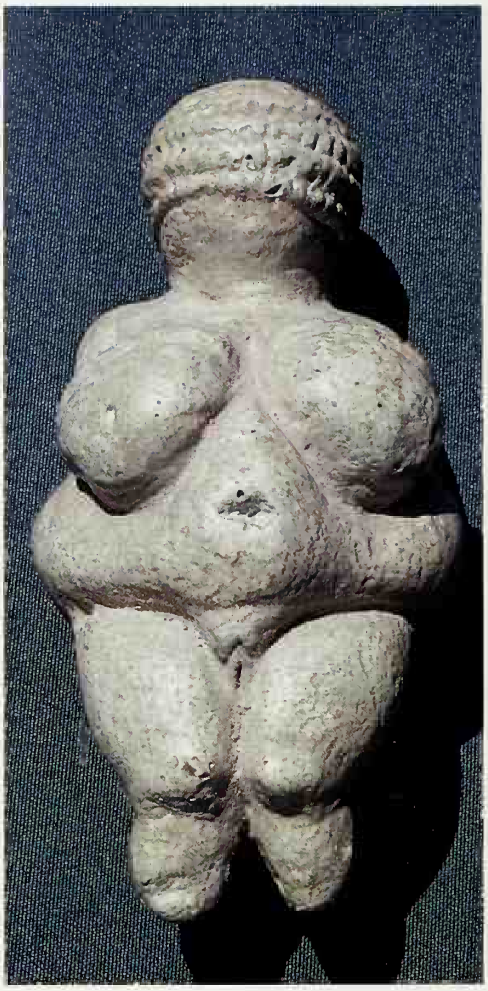
IN CLASSICAL GREECE AND ROME certain areas of religious cult and worship were reserved exclusively for women. They included the wild and ecstatic rites of Dionysus, whose female devotees were the Bacchantes (see DIONYSUS). In Rome, only the Vestal Virgins were allowed to enter the inner sanctuary of the temple of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, where certain objects were kept. Men were not permitted to see these objects or even to know what they were, though they naturally speculated about it. The Roman goddess known euphemistically as *Bona Dea*, 'the good goddess', was attended and worshipped only by women. Once a year the Vestal Virgins and the wife of the principal magistrate honoured her at night in a ceremony which no man was allowed to attend. Myrtle and wine were also taboo. The room was decorated with vine branches and wine was brought in, but it was called milk for the purposes of the evening.

These rituals are long forgotten today, but the women's movement in the modern West has brought with it a revival of the belief in a special feminine spirituality, different from that of men, wiser and more profound. One symptom of this has been a spate of books on the deeply venerated goddess figures of the past, seen as examples of a single figure, the Great Goddess. She was recognized in earlier times as a personification of the earth and as mother of all living things, the supreme feminine principle in the cosmos.

Her earliest images are the crude but powerful prehistoric figurines of women with swelling pregnant bellies, massive breasts and the genital triangle emphasized, like the Venus of Willendorf. These are interpreted as evidence that in the early days of the human race the supreme deity was female. She was the unseen power sensed behind all the rhythms of life, behind birth and growth, and equally behind death and destruction. She was pictured in triple form, expressing three facets of her nature as maiden, mother and crone, corresponding to the waxing, the full and the waning moon. She had a young male consort, a youthful god who impregnated her every year to father the joyous rebirth of the life of nature in the spring, but was subordinate to her (see FACELESS GODDESSES, MOTHER GODDESS).

The Overthrow of the Goddess

In later days the Great Mother was given different names in different parts of the world – she was Inanna or Ishtar, Isis or Cybele or Demeter, Kali or Kuan Yin or Amaterasu – and she was forced to share her throne with male gods, to whom she eventually had to yield her supremacy. Male-oriented, patriarchal religion was introduced by the Aryan invaders who conquered India, the Near East and Greece, bringing with them their violent, despotic, masculine gods. They and their descendants reduced women to an inferior status in a patriarchal social system and fostered the assumption, virtually unquestioned in the West for centuries, that the supreme deity, the god of gods, must be male.



Ancient Art & Architecture Collection

Above The earliest images of the Great Goddess were powerful prehistoric figurines with swelling pregnant bellies, massive breasts and the genital triangle emphasized: the Venus of Willendorf, 25,000 BC Above right More than twenty millenia later, the representation of the Goddess remained much the same: Sumerian relief, 2000 BC, in the Archeological Museum, Aleppo

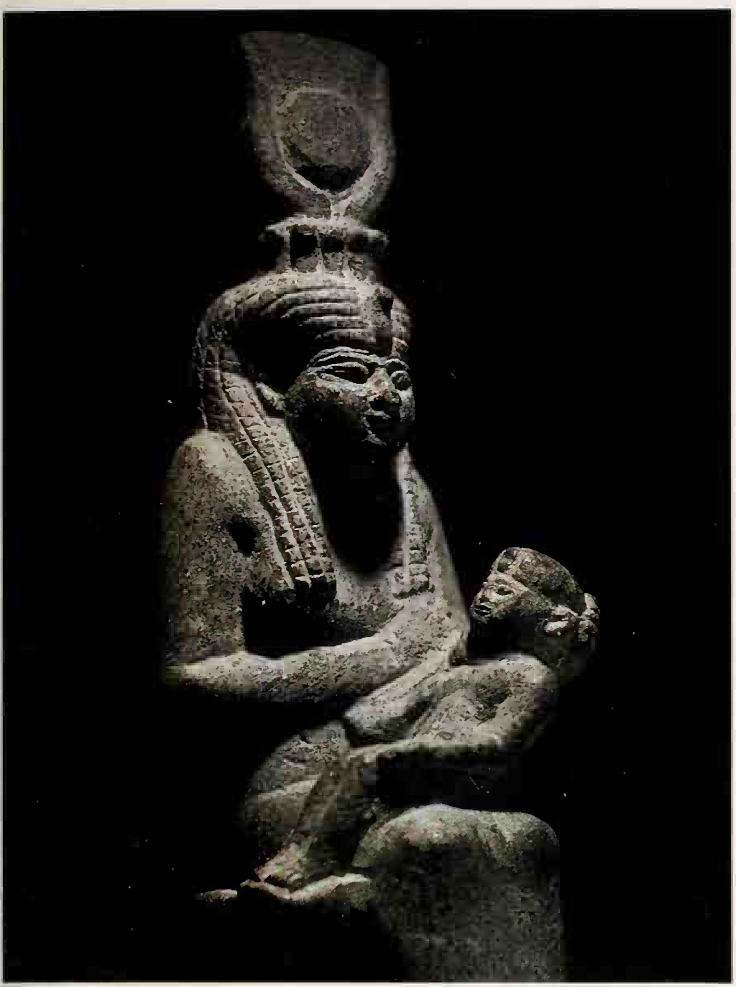
The earlier societies which worshipped the Goddess, according to this line of argument, were earth-centred, peaceable, body-affirming and egalitarian in character. They were in tune with the life-force and they saw human existence as part of the life of the universe as a whole. It was the male-dominated patriarchal, and often puritanical, cultures which put a premium on aggression and destruction, which rejoiced in war, competition and distinctions of rank and which plundered nature.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with their single all-powerful male God, were denounced with special venom by the new partisans of the Goddess, although it was recognized that in Christianity aggressive masculinity had been forced to give way to popular demand sufficiently to allow th Virgin Mary something of the role of th Goddess, albeit in a fundamentally tyrannical patriarchal system.

One of the most influential books alon these lines was *When God Was a Woman* by Merlin Stone, which came out in 1976 *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* b Marija Gimbutas, *The Return of th Goddess* by Edward Whitmont and *Th Once and Future Goddess* by Elinor Gaydo are notable 1980s examples of the genre.

Elinor Gaydon's eyes were opened durin a year in India in the 1960s. In India, sh wrote, 'I had experienced myself as sexual sacred and powerful in a way no moder women in the West can. Our psychologica being has been severed from our biologica selves for so long that we are completely cu off from our true natures. Because I was i touch with this strength, with the celebration and fullness of my being for even s limited a time, I could never return to m old ways of seeing the world.'

The rediscovery of women's true spirituality – of women's 'mysteries' in this sense seemed to hold out a way in which wome could transform their lives, but beyond thi it was felt to offer a road of redemption fo Western society as a whole, which had los all feeling for the natural world that it wa busy despoiling and plundering. In this wa women's spirituality meshed with the powerful 'green' conservation movement an with the prevailing hostility towards scienc and technology, and their apparentl uncaring attitude to the world.



E.T.Archive

Ancient Art & Architecture Collection

The Great Goddess was portrayed in triple form, as maiden, mother and crone, and of these perhaps the most evocative was that of the bringer and nourisher of life *Above left* Isis with the infant Horus: bronze figure from the necropolis of Ballan e Qustul in Nubia *Above* A comparable representation from the other side of the world: the Mexican goddess Xochiquetzal represents love and happiness

The White Goddess

The rediscovery of the Goddess also fitted in with growing sympathy with paganism and disapproval of Christianity in the period following the Second World War. Robert Graves's book *The White Goddess*, published originally in 1946, was a powerful influence on this whole current of ideas and became almost the centre of a cult in itself, though it was, as he warned his readers, a 'very difficult book'. Graves, greatly admired as a poet and historical novelist, set out to demonstrate that the language of the old pagan myths of the Mediterranean area and Northern Europe was 'a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon-goddess, or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age.' He also hoped to show that 'this remains the language of true poetry'. It was a book he felt obscurely driven to write and his White Goddess of Life-in-Death and Death-in-Life was the inspirer of poetic truth. His best-selling account of *The Greek Myths* (1955), though not highly regarded by scholars, contained plenty more fuel on which the fires of paganism and goddess-worship could feed.

The Goddess of Witches

Another influence was the Margaret Murray theory of witchcraft (see MODERN WITCHCRAFT). The idea that the witch covens of medieval and early modern Europe were not devotees of the Devil of Christianity, but had preserved 'the old religion' of pagan, pre-Christian Europe – though again dismissed by scholars – proved powerfully attractive to neo-pagans.

Margaret Murray found very little evidence of the Goddess in medieval witchcraft. Her witches worshipped a male deity, the horned god, who was identified by the Church as Satan and the great supernatural Enemy of Christianity. If witchcraft was fundamentally a nature religion and fertility cult, however, it needed a great feminine principle alongside the male. Modern witchcraft, or Wicca, recruited women who found in it a route to fulfillment not available to them by more conventional means. While some covens were dominated by a male High Priest, there were others which were ruled by their High Priestesses, the earthly representatives of the Goddess.

'Dianic' covens reserved exclusively for women were organized in the United States in the 1970s, and there were others exclusively for men. Most of the Wicca groups, however, have remained open to both sexes, honour both the Goddess and the Horned God, and consider it essential for men to recognize and come to terms with the divine feminine or female archetype.

Elinor Gaydon has pointed out how many contemporary women artists have found inspiration and strength in the image of the Goddess. Miriam Simos, a prominent figure in Wicca in California in the 1970s, who took the name Starhawk, has described herself as 'a leader of the religion of the Great Goddess, the life force manifest in nature, human beings and the world. To me the Goddess is a symbol that evokes women's strength and men's nurturing capabilities, and restores deep value to nature, sexuality and the ecological balance.' In 1975 she was one of the founders of the Covenant of the Goddess, a witchcraft 'church' to which many covens subscribed. In the 1980s she helped to establish a Center for Feminist Spirituality in Berkeley.

A Wicca manifesto from New York proclaimed that: 'WITCH lives and laughs in every woman. She is the free part of each of us, beneath the shy smiles, the acquiescence to absurd male domination, the make-up or flesh-suffocating clothing our sick society demands. There is no "joining" WITCH. If you are a woman and dare to look within yourself, you are a Witch. You make your own rules. You are free and beautiful... Whatever is repressive, solely male-oriented, greedy, puritanical, authoritarian – those are your targets.'

In Britain, meanwhile, the anthropologist T.M.Luhrmann investigated witch covens in London at first hand, by joining them. She found that witches regarded their movement as 'a revival, or re-emergence, of an ancient nature-religion, the most ancient of religions, in which the earth was worshipped as a woman under different names and guises throughout the inhabited world. She was Astarte, Inanna, Isis, Cerridwen... The Goddess is multi-faceted, ever-changing – nature and nature's transformations. She is Artemis, virgin huntress, the crescent moon and the morning's freshness; Selene, Aphrodite and Demeter, in the full bloom of the earth's fertility; Hecate and axe-bearing Cerridwen, the crone who destroys, the dying forests which make room for new growth. The constant theme of the Goddess is cyclicity and transformation: the spinning Fates, the weaving spider, Aphrodite who each year arises virgin from the sea, Isis who swells and floods and diminishes as the Nile. Every face of the Goddess is a different goddess, and yet also the same, in a different aspect...' The Goddess is both a titanic natural force and a person to whom one can talk. One of T.M.Luhrmann's subjects told her: 'I relate to the Goddess every day, in one way or another. I have a little chitchat with Mommy.'

Ecology and the Spiritual Dimension

In the background of these developments was the burgeoning women's movement, which affected religion and spirituality along with virtually every other area of life and had an influence reaching far beyond the comparatively small world of neo-paganism and witchcraft. One of its fundamental convictions was that women shared a set of principles and standards which were different from those of men and of at least equal value. Many feminists went further and believed that women were superior beings, infinitely wiser than men, whose power-hunger, blinkered intellectualism, childish competitiveness and selfish greed had caused all the wars of history and were now threatening the survival of the planet itself. A strong lesbian separatist movement emerged in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, and although most women were not lesbians, there was considerable sympathy for the assertion that women's values were not only different but superior.

In the 1980s the women's movement developed an ecofeminist wing, partly in reaction to the Three Mile Island nuclear plant disaster of 1979, which spurred feminists to organize conferences on ecological issues. Starhawk founded a national ecofeminist organization called the Woman Earth Institute. The issue was presented as an attack on male authoritarian dominance in yet another crucial area – the environment – and on the dangerous irresponsibility of science, with its fundamentally 'masculine' values. Feminists objected not only to men's domination of women, but to whites' domination of blacks and humans' domination of the animal kingdom and the whole world of nature.

In the same decade religion became a popular subject for discussion at feminist conferences and women's spirituality groups blossomed all over the United States. The belief that, far in the past, universal worship of the feminine principle, the Goddess, was accompanied by a peaceful, unselfish and egalitarian order of society which respected nature and the environment proved powerfully inspiring.

Women in Church

In the next step the women's movement invaded the mainstream Christian Churches. In her book *The Second Stage* (1983) Betty Friedan suggested that: 'The most important effect of transcending those old sex roles may be an evolution of morality and religious thought, as the concrete, flexible dailiness that used to be reserved for female private family life is wedded to the noble grandeur of spiritual vision and higher moral principles, as formerly preached from pulpits one hour a week by male priests, ministers and rabbis.'

Back in the 19th century the formidable Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a campaigner for women's rights and author of *The Woman's Bible* (1895), had pointed out that woman is considered a secondary being in the Bible and that this was being used to justify the unequal treatment of women in American life. During the 1970s and 1980s, as women's studies became a popular discipline in American universities, the number of women attending theological colleges showed a marked increase and the whole question of gender in religion and women's place in religious organizations was opened up to examination and debate.

Feminists like Mary Daly, author of *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (1973), argued that the Judaeo-Christian tradition of God as male has authorised the assumption that feminineness is a secondary, deficient, inferior form of being. When women are denied the full potential of being human, trapped in the category of 'the second sex', their experience of life is diminished and their ability to fulfill their true potential is severely hindered – to the disadvantage of human society as a whole.

Some feminists wanted God to be recognized as androgynous, not only as God the Father, but as God the Mother as well. The American Roman Catholic feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether, however, a highly influential figure in Britain as well as in the United States, rejected the idea of divine androgyny as inadequate because it perpetuated the traditional dualism of male and female, which she wanted feminism to move beyond. 'The vindication of the "feminine", as we have inherited that concept from patriarchy,' she wrote, 'will always be set within a dualistic scheme of complementary principles that segregate women on one side and men on the other. Even if this scheme is given a reversed valuation, the same dualism remains.'

In her book *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (1983) she attacked the whole idea of a hierarchy of values, a dualism of superior and inferior based on the traditional male-female model, which she saw underlying the major evils of the time – racism, poverty and the destruction of the environment.

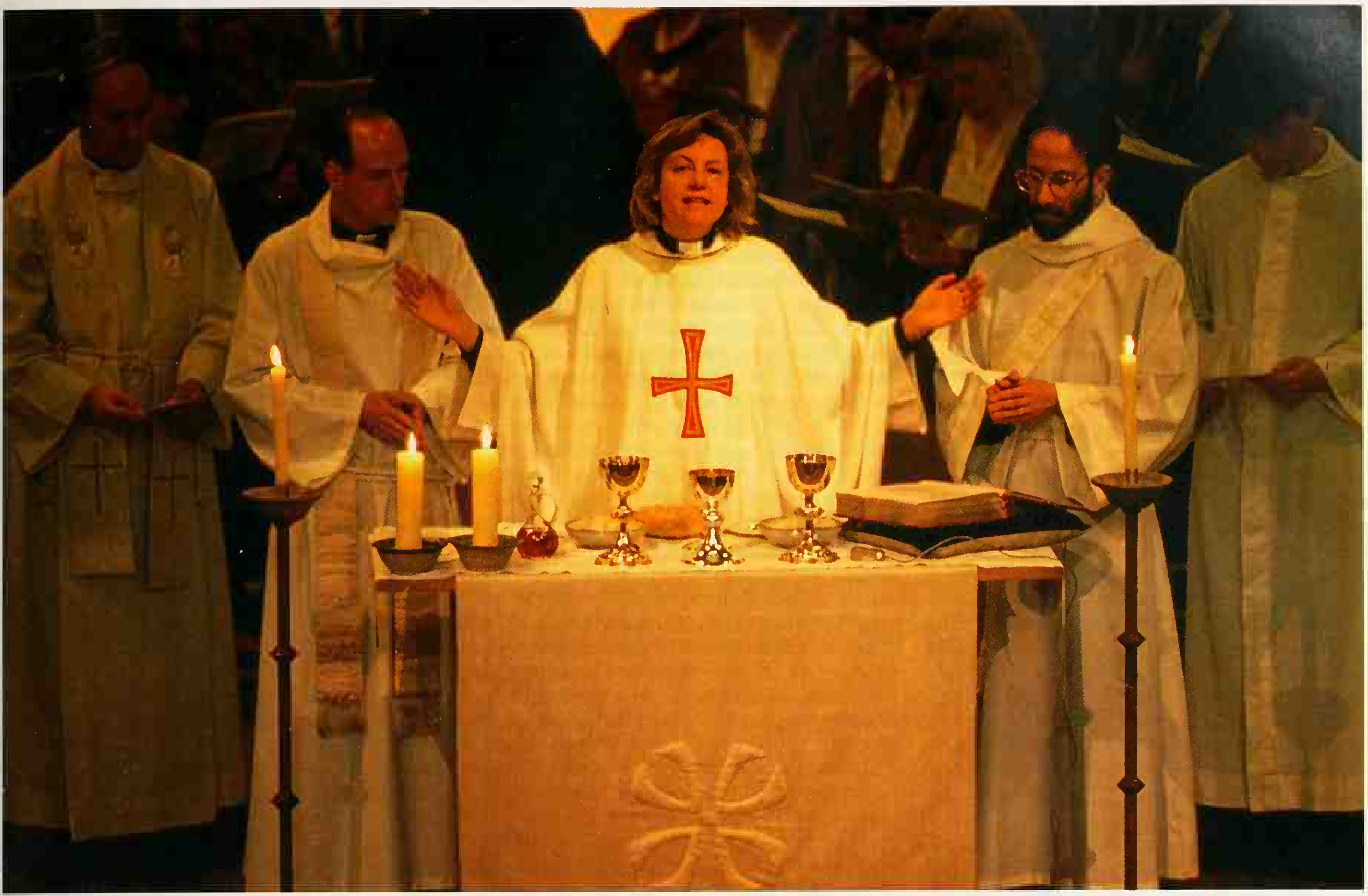
Above **Great Goddess as a fertility deity: Sumer, 18th century BC *Right* Rev. Angela Berners-Wilson celebrates her first communion, following her ordination as a priest of the Anglican Church in Bristol, March 1994**

Feminists have varied considerably in their attitudes to religion and the Churches. Some have rejected organized religion altogether. They see it as an authoritarian power structure which helps to keep people, not only women, in a state of dependence and prevents them from shaping their own lives and taking responsibility for themselves. Others believe that religion is too important to people to be rejected, especially in nurturing the spiritual side of human beings, in teaching good moral behaviour and in its role in consolation and healing. There is a gulf, however, between those who think that the sexist character of the conventional Churches can be transformed and those who do not believe that this can be achieved and so look to new organizations or groups outside the mainstream Churches.

'The important fact which all feminists have in common,' Ursula King says, 'whether they be antireligious, inclined to reform or revolutionary recasting, is the deep conviction that a new spirit is needed, a different approach to symbols, myths and rites capable to reflect and express their new experience of self, world and cosmos today.'

A Feminine Christ

As the women's movement grew inside the Churches, there came demands to alter the male-dominated language of prayers and services, to recognize God as She and talk of Her power and grace. As this trend has gained confidence and support – from male clergymen as well as women worshippers – some remarkable spectacles have astonished and alarmed more old-fashioned Christians, male and female alike. In 1994, for example, Manchester Cathedral in England witnessed an ecumenical women's



Patrick Landmann/Gamma

service in which God was referred to as She and a Christa, a crucified female Christ, was carried in procession through the nave. The Bishop of Manchester approved of the ceremony as moving and helpful, but many of the more conservative cathedral clergy were horrified and embarrassed.

New Age paganism, the tendency to see Christianity as only one among many equally deserving religions, the belief that all religions are fundamentally the same, and the search for supportive and inspiring themes and symbols from religions all over the world, have all eaten their way into mainstream Christianity itself. An alarmed newspaper report from the United States in 1993 said that 'thousands of Catholic women – mostly educated suburbanites – have become involved in a subterranean cult of neo-pagan Wicca worship in which they read the runes, celebrate the seasons, go to forests, caves and hill-tops for nature rites and gather to "summon up the power of the life-force".' There was an account of a spring equinox ritual carried out by a group of Roman Catholic nuns in Philadelphia, in which some 40 women in masks danced to the sound of drums before an altar with Buddhist statues on it and figures of women wreathed with flowers.

The most radical groups of nuns were identified as the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Benedictines, the Sisters of Loretto and the Sisters of St Joseph, but many less extreme nuns were reported to hold regular sessions in which they criticised oppressive patriarchy and celebrated the transcendent through female images.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, in *Woman-Guides* (1985) and *Woman-Church* (1986), provided a canon and liturgy for a Roman Catholic female impetus which would displace the Bible from its position as the fundamental text of Christianity and make it one among many texts drawn from other religions. A hymn to a Great Goddess of Babylonia was included and a picture of the goddess Isis leading an Ancient Egyptian queen by the hand was captioned: 'Hand in hand, women guide each other as they claim their buried past and journey to the place of the death of the patriarchy and the beginning of new possibilities for woman being.' She believed there was an ecological lesson to be learned from pagan veneration of nature and that pagan myths and cults of goddesses could provide resources for women's identity today. The reaction of orthodox Christian critics was, needless to say, sulphurous.

It was not only in the West that women claimed spiritual roles that had long been male property. In Kiev in the Ukraine in 1993 there was uproar when members of an offbeat Christian cult called the Great White Brotherhood occupied the cathedral of St Sophia in the firm conviction that the end of the world was at hand, and had to be evicted by force. Though the cult had been founded by a man, the charismatic figure at the centre of events was a woman who called herself Maria Devi Khristos and claimed to be the Messiah and an incarnation of both Christ and the Virgin Mary.

Women at the Altar

In the early 1990s in Britain the most visible manifestation of women's spirituality was the drive for the ordination of women as Church of England priests. The Nonconformist Churches, less Catholic in their sympathies, were already accustomed to women ministers, as also in America, where a woman had been ordained as a Congregationalist minister as far back as 1853. Reformed Judaism appointed its first female rabbi in New York in 1972.

The Roman Catholic Church, however, could not bring itself to countenance a woman priest; neither could the Church of England for many years, while pressure from women and their supporters mounted. The argument reached a point at which the Archbishop of Canterbury announced, to furious opposition, that the view that only a man could be a priest was a heresy. Eventually the Synod of the Church of England voted in favour of the ordination of women in 1992 and the first women were ordained two years later. It was a landmark in the progress of the women's movement.

FURTHER READING: Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (Dial Press, New York, 1976); Elinor Gaydon, *The Once and Future Goddess* (Harper & Row, 1989); T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (Harvard University Press, 1989); U. King, *Women and Spirituality* (Macmillan, London, 1989); Barbara G. Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (Harper & Row, 1983).

WOODPECKER

MOST WOODPECKERS assert their possession of a nesting territory not by song, but by a rattling noise or 'drumming' made by striking the bill rapidly on a branch – a distinctive drum-roll quite different from the sound made by a woodpecker when pecking at a branch to extract an insect or make a hole for its nest. This drumming was of great significance to our ancestors who, living mainly out of doors and dependent for their well-being on propitious weather, paid much attention to birds which seemed to them to be not only weather-wise but actually able to influence the weather, especially the amount of rainfall.

Listening to the woodpecker drumming in a tree high up towards the sky, they assumed that he was making miniature thunder, calling for and bringing down rain. Such a bird, in league with the higher powers, deserved respect and could teach men how to act when they needed rain for their crops. It is a widespread practice for people anxiously desiring rain to make imitation thunder by drumming, the underlying idea being that like would attract like. In Estonia, during times of drought, a man used to climb a tree in a sacred grove, carrying a small cask or kettle, and rattle a stick in it: he acted the part of a woodpecker making thunder.

It is still believed in the English countryside that the loud and frequent calling of the green woodpecker foretells rain, although observation shows that this has no foundation in fact. In Scandinavia, also, the woodpecker is considered a weather prophet. Frenchmen call the bird 'the miller's advocate', because in times of drought it is thought to plead insistently for water to turn the mill wheel.

The red crowns of European woodpeckers have also played a part in gaining them their status as thunderbirds and rainbirds. Species with conspicuous red markings tend to be associated with fire, and so the woodpecker came to be connected not only with thunder but also with the lightning which accompanies it.

Perhaps the first hint in literature that the woodpecker was considered a rainmaker and thunderbird is its name in Babylonian, meaning 'the axe of Ishtar', for Ishtar was a fertility goddess. The earliest written evidence of the bird's exalted status is a reference by Aristophanes: 'Zeus won't in a hurry the sceptre restore to the woodpecker tapping the oak.' There appears to have been a belief that the bird once occupied the throne of the High God and received reverence such as Zeus received in Aristophanes's time.

There is definite evidence that the woodpecker was consulted as an oracle, if not actually worshipped. An account survives of an oracle connected with Mars in the Apennine Mountains, where an image of a woodpecker was placed on a wooden pillar; engraved gems show a warrior consulting such an oracle. Mars was originally associated with fertility as much as with war (see MARS), which perhaps explains his association with the fertility-bringing woodpecker.

The First Ploughman

There is further evidence that the woodpecker is a bird of fertility. Greek myth relates that Celeus, whose name means 'green woodpecker', attempted to steal the honey which nourished Zeus while he was an infant. As a punishment the angry god turned Celeus into a green woodpecker. Celeus was the father of Triptolemus, the inventor of the plough – a king or chieftain instructed by Demeter, the Earth Mother, in the ritual which procured the fertility of the soil.

The significance of all this is obscure until we realize that the green woodpecker often feeds on the ground, picking up ants, and that its beak could be regarded as serving the same purpose as the primitive plough, which was not much more than a single prong drawn through the soil. The story says in effect that the green woodpecker was the first ploughman.

More recent legends confirm the woodpecker's connection with ploughing. According to a tale of the Letts, a people of the eastern Baltic, God and the Devil engaged in a ploughing match. God had a woodpecker to draw his plough, but the Devil had horses and quickly ploughed a whole field, while the woodpecker was making little progress. During the night God borrowed the horses and ploughed a field. The Devil was so impressed next day that he stupidly exchanged his horses for the woodpecker. When the bird lagged behind he angrily struck it on the head and this is why the woodpecker has a blood-coloured crown. In a veiled way this story tells of the suppression of ancient beliefs.

There are plenty of other indications of the association between the woodpecker, rain and fertility. In France, Germany, Austria and Denmark it is given names equivalent to the English local name 'rain bird'. In Italy there is a saying, 'When the woodpecker pecks, expect rain or storm.' In France the story goes that at the Creation, when God had made the earth, he called on the birds to help by hollowing out places which could be filled with water and so become seas, lakes and ponds. Only the woodpecker refused to join in. A German version says that it was because she would not dirty her fine plumage. So the bird was condemned to peck wood and to drink nothing but rain. That is why she clings to the tree trunk with beak upwards calling, 'Rain, Rain'.

It was at one time believed, or half-believed, that the mysterious herb springwort, with which doors and locks could be opened, could be obtained by blocking the woodpecker's nesting hole. The bird would fetch the herb and apply it to the blocked entrance. If a strip of red cloth was placed below the nest, the bird, mistaking it for fire, would drop the sprig on it. Another plan was to watch where the woodpecker went to fetch the plant.

The legend seems to be an Eastern tale in Western dress. A version was current in Greece but the bird concerned was the hoopoe. It had its nest in a wall, but three times the owner plastered it up and three times the bird removed the plaster by applying the springwort. The tale as told in Germany is similar to a version quoted by Pliny.

Probably it passed from Greek literature into Latin and is not, as might at first appear, the concoction of simple country folk. What may be an embellished and distorted version was current in a region of Germany. It was said that a princess incarcerated in the Markgrabenstein could be released by the man who went to the place at midnight on a Friday carrying a white woodpecker.

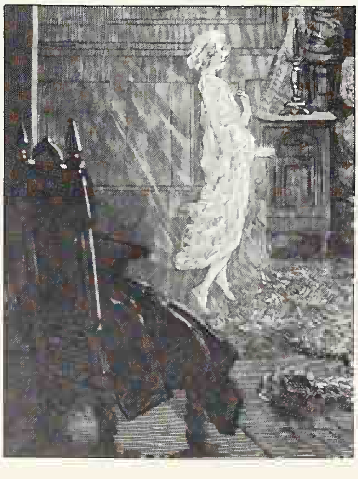
E. A. ARMSTRONG

FURTHER READING: E. A. Armstrong, *The Folklore of Birds* (Dover, N.Y., 1970).

Wraith

The double or apparition of someone who is alive; its appearance is generally taken as an omen of the person's imminent death, or as a sign that he is in serious danger or trouble.

See ASTRAL BODY; DOUBLE; SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES.



Mary Evans

Wreath

A circle or garland of flowers or leaves, bestowed as a mark of distinction, or placed in a grave or on a coffin to honour the dead; evergreen wreaths are used as Christmas decorations; in Greece and Rome poets, athletes and other persons of note were honoured with laurel wreaths or crowns.

See BURIAL; LAUREL.

The custom of killing a wren at midwinter and parading it with elaborate ceremony through the neighbourhood, observed in parts of France and Ireland, was probably connected with ancient sun rituals

WREN

Bodleian Library Colour Filmstrip

ALTHOUGH IT IS nearly our smallest bird, inconspicuously coloured and unlikely to call attention to itself, except when it utters its relatively loud song, the wren is a familiar bird to most people because it is common, and besides inhabiting woods is to be seen in hedgerows and gardens. The folklore of the wren is of exceptional interest as it is the only bird associated with a fairly elaborate ritual in the British Isles, besides being represented in legends and oral traditions.

Wren ritual is performed throughout most of Ireland and to a limited extent in the Isle of Man. It seems to have disappeared in Wales, as it has in England, but scraps of evidence and local traditions indicate that it persisted until not very long ago, in one form or another, in many of the southern counties. It was never established in Ulster or Scotland.

The Wren Hunt and Procession as performed in Ireland may be briefly described. In those localities where an actual wren figures in the ceremonial it may be caught by beating the hedgerows or captured in its roost. On St Stephen's Day (26 December) a number of lads and young men form a party and visit the houses in neighbouring villages, carrying the corpse of the bird with them, or more often now a toy bird or some other object representing a wren. Girls occasionally take part, another indication that the custom has deteriorated. The 'Wren Boys' dress up for the occasion in odds and ends such as pyjama jackets and fantastic headgear. When they call at a cottage they sing a Wren Song in English or Irish, seeking a contribution from the householder. When the Wren Boys have finished their calls they hold a celebration, paid for by the collections made during the day.

French wren ceremonies were enacted in an area stretching from Marseilles northwestwards up to Brittany. They were more elaborate than in Ireland, probably indicating that the cult was carried to the British Isles from France and lost some of its characteristics on the way. At Carcassonne, the Wren Boys of the Rue St Jean assembled towards the end of the year and went into the countryside to beat the bushes and obtain a wren. The first lad to kill one was proclaimed King and to him fell the duty of carrying the bird back to town on a pole. The King proceeded through the streets on the last day of the year with all who had participated in the Hunt, accompanied by a drum and fife band and carrying torches. Here and there they would halt and a lad would chalk on a house 'Vive le Roi' and the number of the New Year. On Twelfth Day, the King arrayed himself in a blue robe and, wearing a crown and carrying a sceptre, went to High Mass at the parish church; he was preceded by a man carrying the wren fastened to the top of a pole, which was decorated with a wreath of olive leaves, oak or mistletoe cut from an oak. After the service the King, together with his retinue, paid visits to the bishop, the mayor, the magistrates and other notable citizens. Money was given to the participants, a banquet was held in the evening, and the celebrations concluded with a dance. Unfortunately this picturesque ceremony was suppressed in 1830. In some places in France and the Isle of Man the wren was solemnly buried in a churchyard.

The ceremonies are certainly very ancient and probably date from the Bronze Age. Unfortunately, documentary evidence earlier than the 19th century is practically nonexistent, so we have to piece together an interpretation from a variety of scattered clues. The geographical distribution of the ritual is significant. It would seem that the people amongst whom wren ceremonies were important reached southern France from elsewhere in the Mediterranean and carried elements of their culture northwestwards, eventually reaching the British Isles. There are grounds for believing that these same folk may have been the builders of some of the megalithic monuments which are found in areas where wren ritual was practised.

Through the Keyhole of Hell

The date of the custom provides a valuable clue to its meaning. Midwinter was for our ancestors a crucial turning-point of the year and many ceremonies performed at this time were intended to combat or chase away the powers of darkness and co-operate with the sun in restoring light, warmth and growth to the world. The wren frequents thickets and penetrates holes, crevices and other dark places, as its scientific name *Troglodytes troglodytes*, 'dweller in caves', indicates. It was therefore a suitable representative of the powers opposed to or complementary to the sun.

This view is borne out by the well-known fable of the competition between the eagle and the wren to decide which could fly highest. The wren defeated the eagle – the bird of the sun – by trickery. In many languages the wren is called 'king', suggesting that long ago it was regarded as allied with mysterious powers; these may have been the dark potencies believed to reside in the earth. An ancient Irish document refers to the wren as a bird with oracular powers.

As heat proceeds from the sun, it was natural that birds, being creatures of the sky, should be regarded as fire-bringers. Such birds were commonly identified by the red badge of fire on their plumage. The robin (see ROBIN) was one of these and in France the wren was also a fire-bringer, perhaps because when it is in its full spring plumage some of its feathers have a ruddy tinge. It was said that when the wren fetched fire from heaven most of its plumage was scorched away. The other birds compassionately donated some of their feathers, but the robin came too close and its breast feathers were burnt. Another French version relates that as the wren was flying to earth with the fire its wings burst into flame; it passed the brand to the robin, whose breast feathers also became alight. The high-flying lark then came to the rescue and brought the precious burden to mankind. The Bretons explain that the wren fetched fire, not from heaven but from hell. Her plumage became scorched as she escaped the infernal regions through the keyhole.

So closely were the robin and wren associated in folklore that they were regarded as male and female of the same species – a notion which has lingered to the present time in some localities.

The robin redbreast and the wren
Are God Almighty's cock and hen.

A Scots ballad refers to their marriage tiff over who ate the porridge:

The robin redbreast and the wran
Coost out about the parritch pan;
And ere the robin got a spune
The wran she had the parritch dune.

Although in many localities the wren was hunted and killed at the winter solstice, this does not imply that it was generally regarded as in any sense an evil creature. On the contrary, it was usual for birds and beasts held in high respect to be sacrificed on some special occasion during the year. In France it was said that the crime of robbing a wren's nest would entail the destruction by fire of the culprit's house, or that his fingers would shrivel and drop off.

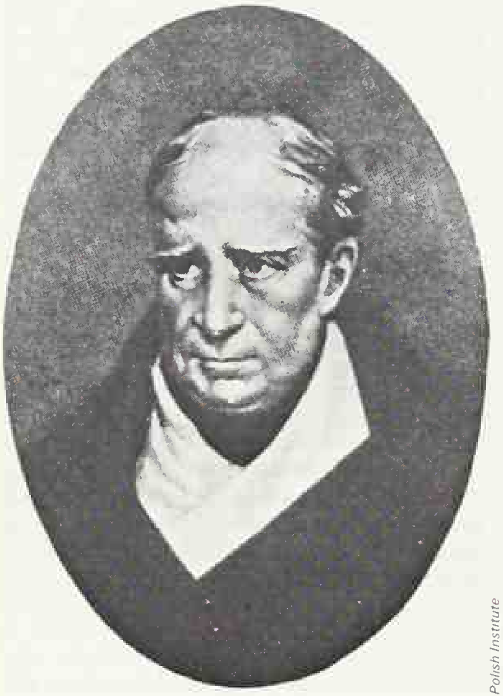
An indication of the affection in which the wren was held in France is provided by its appearance in legends connected with various saints. A delightful story records that St Malo, finding that a wren had built a nest in his habit, which he had laid on a bush while working in the monastery vineyard, went without the garment until the bird had reared its young. St Dol, noticing that the monks at his monastery were distracted during their devotions by the calls of the birds in the neighbouring woods, ordered the birds to depart. He made an exception of the wren, because its sparkling song cheered the brethren without interfering with their concentration on prayer and praise.

E. A. ARMSTRONG

FURTHER READING: E. A. Armstrong, *The Wren* (Collins, 1955).

Ironically, the lasting influence of this Polish Messianist was not in his hoped-for 'Absolute Reform of Human Knowledge' but in passing on to the famous magician Eliphas Levi, the secrets of occultism which he had so long attempted to hide

J.M.H.-WRONSKI



Polish Institute

JOSEPH MARIA HOENE-WRONSKI was born at Wolsztyn in Poland in 1776. His career led him from misfortune to misfortune, until he died in Paris in 1853 in a condition which the intrigued observers of a man believed variously to be a fraud, a genius, a madman and a divinity, unite in calling miserable. But he left disciples, and after the First World War a 'Hoëne-Wronski Institute of Messianism' was set up in Warsaw. More recently, a lengthy bibliography of Wronskiite works was issued by the Polish Academy. To Wronski's credit must be placed the crucial influence in the life of Eliphas Levi (see LEVI), various mechanical inventions, including what seems to have been a tank, and the discovery in 1803 of 'the Absolute'.

This misplaced Renaissance figure was the son of Antoine Hoëne, the court architect (the 'Wronski' was added later). When the Poles rebelled in 1794 against the partition of their country between Russia and Prussia, Wronski distinguished himself in the fighting but was eventually captured by the Russians, with whom he took the opportunity to enlist. Eventually he left the Russian service with the rank of major, and spent the next three years studying philosophy in Germany, chiefly the system of Immanuel Kant. In 1800 his dormant sense of patriotism revived, and he set off to join the legions gathering in Italy under Dombrowski to free Poland. But the patriot succumbed to the man of science and Wronski returned to scientific researches at the Observatory of Marseilles. In 1810 he married the daughter of a well-known French astronomer: by that date he had discovered the Absolute.

The Absolute is the knowledge of truth attained through human reason. At least, Wronski always claimed he had reached this state through rational thought, but as his philosophical works are couched in mathematical terms, it is almost impossible for the layman to understand him. From the sum of his sense impressions, a man could 'create reality' in accordance with Wronski's 'Law of Creation', a mathematical expression of no meaning to those who are not mathematicians, and little enough significance to some who are. Wronski's supporters derive his theory from pure mathematics and the influence of Kant; but it is just as likely that it comes from mystical experiences and a knowledge of the Cabala (see CABALA).

Christ among Nations

The rebellion in which Wronski changed sides was one in a series of ill-starred attempts by the Poles to reassert their nationhood. Perpetually fought over and partitioned, Poland became for Romantic Europe, and for France in particular, the epitome of heroic resistance. Another rebellion, hopelessly ill-timed, took place in 1830–31 and the Tsarist regime allowed the wholesale emigration of the Polish officer corps.

About 12,000 Polish refugees were allowed to enter France, where they became national heroes. Until that time Wronski had enjoyed a monopoly of 'Messianism', the Polish national philosophy; he became most disgruntled when one of the late arrivals, the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, started lecturing at the Collège de France. Mickiewicz, when told that Wronski was accusing him of stealing his ideas, asked whether Jesus Christ had taken out a patent.

Polish Messianism compared the Polish and Jewish nations. The perpetual suffering of the Poles was seen as a counterpart to the sufferings of the dispersed tribes of Israel, forever denied the right to exist as a free nation. Nevertheless they were the chosen people: to justify the national run of bad luck it was argued that Poland was the Christ among nations. Just as Christ, by his suffering, had redeemed each individual human being, Poland, by hers, would redeem all nations.

Sage in Tatters

The apocalyptic mood of these doctrines was emphasized by two factors. The first was the existence in 18th century Poland of the very influential Jewish revivalist movement known as Hasidism (see HASIDISM). Founded by Israel Baal Shem, who died in 1760, this represented an attempt to make of the Jewish Cabala a really popular tradition. Some of this cabalistic enthusiasm was imported by the Polish immigrants into France where, transformed by the romantic imagination of Eliphas Levi, it became the basis of the later revival of ritual magic. The second current of thought was that represented by Martinism (see MARTINISTS) and other forms of occult Freemasonry, which had thoroughly penetrated the Masonic orders in Poland and Russia and were prominent in liberal and anti-Tsarist circles. Such doctrines, with their symbolic interpretation of Masonic ritual and ideas of 'Hidden Chiefs' behind the apparent superiors of the Order, were also markedly to influence the development of modern occultism (see MASTERS).

But Wronski, although he had read the German mystic Boehme, and was expert in the Cabala and familiar with the teachings of the early Gnostics, was most anxious to conceal his occult studies, according to Eliphas Levi. His teachings were supposedly strictly rationalist: he had, after all, to earn his living. He was soon forced into penury by the withdrawal of a subsidy which the French Academy had paid him when he studied at Marseilles. The publication of his first work was enough, embodying as it did the 'Supreme Law of Algorithmy'.

Wronski's devotion to his own genius was admirable. He survived by schoolmastering in Montmartre; he went about in wooden clogs; his little child died. In this state, he is hardly to be blamed for fastening onto a gullible businessman called Arson, who had made a fortune and wanted to improve himself. In 1812 Arson met Wronski through a mutual friend and was overwhelmed by the wisdom of the sage in tatters. He agreed to take a course of instruction from Wronski, and eventually financed the publication of his Messianic works, which were soon rolling off the presses in indigestible volumes. Then Arson was initiated into the secret of the Absolute. Perhaps this was less illuminating than h had expected, for the businessman decided that he wanted to go back on the bargain and published a pamphlet entitled *Materials towards a History of the World's Great Frauds*. Wronski replied, and a polemical battle began, which was continued in the courts to the total discomfiture of Arson, who had foolishly signed a binding contract. Wronski ever afterwards declared Arson to be a real incarnation of Satan.

Sum of Human Knowledge

To do Wronski justice, if he was out to exploit Arson it was solely to publish his books. This seems all he was ever interested in; but it rapidly became necessary to seek new sources of income. In the hope of claiming a reward offered by the British Board o Longitude for improvements in their system of navigation, Wronski pounced on an error in the *Nautical Almanac*, sent the Board a complex correction to their theory of refractions and followed it to London. Here he was soon reduced again to extreme poverty. The *Nautical Almanac* incorporated his correction without payment or acknowledgement; Wronski petitioned Parliament, showered Sir Humphry Davy with letters and persuaded a clergyman to swear before the Lord Mayor as to the justice of his case. The learned bodies maintained a stony silence.

In this period of total catastrophe Wronsk began yet another project, which for som time seemed to promise not merely relief from poverty but positive riches. It was a system for steam engines which he called the 'dynamogenic system': the engine could dispense with rails, travelling on specially reinforced roads. By 1833 he had actually signed a contract with a French company which would have kept him comfortably for at least 15 years. But Wronski's soaring mind had deduced from his invention further principles of mechanics, which he conceived it his duty to publish. The company objected to Wronski's making public property of their experiments, using, moreover, the money given to him to build working models. They broke the contract and Wronski was again without support.

He was not to find a new patron till 1850; but somehow his works were still printed. Appeals to the Tsar failed to produce the expected summons to implement his political programme immediately. But at this time he met Eliphas Levi, whom he is said to have initiated into the secrets of the Cabala.

It is indeed ironic to think that the lasting influence of the Polish Messianist was not in his hoped-for 'Absolute Reform of Human Knowledge', but in passing on the secrets of occultism which he had so long attempted to hide. For this encounter gave a completely new direction to the life of the former Abbé Constant, turning Levi from the lunatic fringe of politics towards magic. Shortly afterwards he adopted his pseudonym.

One day in 1873 Eliphas Levi discovered in a junk shop Wronski's pride and joy. This was the Prognometer. Whilst the Pole had been alive, the disciple had never been allowed to touch it; now he bought the machine. Inside the central globe of this curious construction was another, inscribed with equations. By adjusting the machine, the operator could bring together on any given point the sum of human knowledge. The Prognometer contained the solution to every problem. Wronski's widow survived him, poverty-stricken, but believing herself to have been married to a god.

J. C. N. WEBB

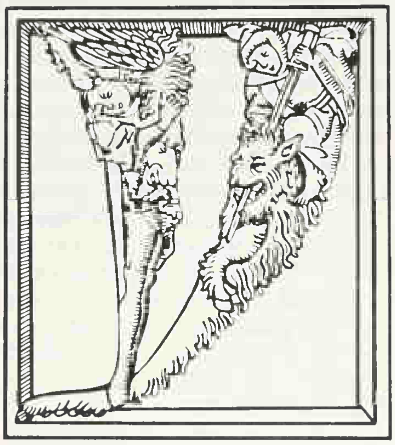
WRYNECK

THE WRYNECK is a rather inconspicuous, slim, greyish-brown bird with mottled and streaked plumage, which lives in woodland and is related to the woodpeckers. Both its common name and its specific scientific name, *torquilla*, refer to the way in which the bird twists and turns its neck when disturbed at the nest or handled.

Today the wryneck is commoner on the Continent and attracted the attention of the Greeks in classical times. Aristotle gives an excellent description of it in his *Natural History*. Among the Greeks it had importance in ritual as well as mythology. It seems that the bird was spread out on a wheel with four spokes, which was then rotated as part of a magical procedure, probably as a love charm. In all probability this custom, in which the wryneck was associated with a revolving wheel, arose from observation of the peculiar manner in which it rotates its neck. Until recently the wheel had many magical associations (see WHEEL), arising in large part from its movement seeming to resemble the curved path of the sun and moon across the sky.

As the rotating wheel had magical power, it was assumed that the bird which rotated its head and arrived from abroad when the sun was rising higher in the sky also had magical significance. Thus it became involved with a complex of ideas – fire and fertility, sun and moon, witchcraft and love, gods and goddesses. On a Greek vase Adonis is depicted holding out a wryneck to the goddess of love, Aphrodite. On another, Cupid, winged and nude, revolves a wheel in front of Adonis while a female figure holds out a wryneck.

When the bird was commoner in England countryfolk noticed that it returned in spring about the same time as the cuckoo or a little before it; hence it was called in Norfolk 'cuckoo's leader', in Gloucestershire 'cuckoo's footman' and in East Anglia 'cuckoo's mate'. Other names are derived from peculiarities in its behaviour – 'turkey bird' because of the way it ruffles its neck feathers when disturbed, 'writhe neck' and 'snake bird' from its neck-twisting and 'tongue bird' because of its long tongue.



The god of Israel revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush with the words 'I am who I am': modern scholarship suggests an origin and development of the cult of Yahweh far different from that presented in the Bible

YAHWEH

ACCORDING TO modern academic opinion, 'Yahweh' represents the personal name of the god of Israel. In the ancient religions, gods had personal names as well as titles: thus in the Hebrew Bible the god of Israel is called Yahweh as well as 'God' (in Hebrew, *Elohim*), or 'God Almighty' (*El Shaddai*). Yahweh is actually a vocalized form of what is known as the divine Tetragrammaton, the four consonantal letters YHWH by which the personal name of Israel's god is written in the Hebrew scriptures (see NAMES).

Hebrew was originally written in a consonantal script, the vowels being supplied by the reader. But the name signified by YHWH gradually became too sacred to be pronounced, with the result that the original vowels were forgotten. Instead of pronouncing the name where it occurred in the scriptures, the Jews substituted *Adonai* (My Lord). For this reason, in English translations of the Bible YHWH has generally been rendered as 'the Lord'. Another English rendering of the name, often used in hymns, is 'Jehovah', but the form derives from a medieval usage for which there is no authority. Some scholars think that another early form of the name was 'Yahu', which could have been a primitive cultic invocation: *ya-hu*, 'oh He!'

There has been much speculation about the meaning of the name Yahweh. This speculation can even be traced far back into the Bible itself, for the Hebrew author of Exodus 3. 14, who may have written about 800 BC, tried to explain the name. The passage is very important and merits quotation. It occurs in the dramatic account of Moses and the burning bush, which was intended to explain how Yahweh first revealed his concern for the Israelites, who were then in bondage to the Egyptians.

The episode begins by telling how the attention of Moses was attracted, one day in the desert of Horeb, by a burning bush. On going near to investigate, Moses heard a voice announcing: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' The mysterious presence then revealed his intention to deliver the people of Israel from Egypt and settle them in the land of Canaan, and that Moses should be his agent in effecting this. In reply, the astounded Moses asked: 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' The answer then given is in fact an attempt to explain the meaning of 'Yahweh'. Moses is told by the strange divinity: 'I AM WHO I AM . . . Say this to the people of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you."'

In this curious statement the ancient Hebrew writer was trying to connect the name Yahweh with the verb 'to be' (*hayah*). Today scholars still debate its meaning; it has recently been suggested by a specialist of great authority that the name signifies 'he causes to be, or brings into being'.

Another passage in the book of Exodus (6.2–3) reveals that the ancient Jews were aware that Yahweh had not always been worshipped under that name by their ancestors: 'And God said to Moses, "I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty (*El Shaddai*), but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them."' This consciousness that Yahweh had become the god of Israel at some definite point in the past finds graphic expression in the account of the covenant made between Yahweh and Israel at Mt Sinai, as recorded in Exodus. This momentous event is described as having taken place shortly after Israel's marvellous deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Moses had led the Israelite tribes into the Sinai desert, to the sacred mountain of Yahweh. The mysterious god, into whose presence Moses then ascends, is represented as promising the terms of the covenant to Israel: 'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19.5–6).

The Sacred History

Belief in this ancient covenant has conferred on the Jewish people their distinctive character and destiny in the history of mankind. Their unique achievements and awful sufferings stem from their conviction that Yahweh, whom they identify with the divine Creator of the universe, made them his Elect People (see ELECTION). The records of his dealings with their race constitute their holy scriptures, on which both their cultural and religious life have been continuously nourished. It is from these scriptures, however, that modern scholars have reconstructed a very different account of the origin and development of the cult of Yahweh.

Nearly a century of critical study of the Hexateuch (the first six books of the Bible) has shown that a single writer or a succession of writers were responsible for presenting Yahweh as the unique god of Israel. It appears that the ancient Hebrew writers who created the tradition about Yahweh were the literary representatives of a powerful group of Yahwist devotees concerned to promote the cult of Yahweh. They were obliged to do this because Yahweh was not originally the god of many of the tribes which came to form the people of Israel.

In the Hexateuch three distinct cycles of tradition about Yahweh can be discerned. The first can best be designated the 'Primeval History'. It starts at Genesis 2.4 with Yahweh's creation of Adam and ends by telling how the original unity of mankind was broken by the confusion of languages, as divine punishment for the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1–9). In this Primeval History, Yahweh is presented in a universalist setting as the Creator of the human race. The Jews do not figure specifically in the narrative; but a hint is given about their future settlement in the land of Canaan in the curious episode concerning Ham's offence against his father Noah, recorded in Genesis 9. 20–27. Instead of cursing Ham, Noah curses Ham's son, Canaan, and decrees that he shall be the slave of Noah's other sons, Shem and Japheth. From Shem, we are told, the Hebrews descended, and the Philistines from Japheth. Thus the Yahwist writer prepared the way for his later narrative: for the Hebrews and the Philistines were to dispossess the Canaanites of Canaan, their land.

The next cycle of Yahwist tradition can be aptly termed the 'Patriarchal Saga'; for it describes the careers of four generations of Hebrew patriarchs who are presented as the ancestors of the Israelites. They are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the sons of Jacob, the most notable being Joseph. It concludes with a series of vividly described episodes concerning the fortunes of Joseph, used by the Yahwist writer to explain how the descendants of the patriarchs came to settle in Egypt instead of Canaan.

The third cycle of Yahwist tradition begins in the first chapter of the book of Exodus. A long period has elapsed since the sons of Jacob first settled in Egypt, and their offspring have now grown into a populous nation. Their increasing numbers so alarm the Egyptians that they enslave them. It is to deliver Israel from this oppression that Yahweh appears to Moses in the burning bush, and commissions him to tell Pharaoh to release the people. The colourful account of the ten plagues that precede the exodus from Egypt, and the marvellous crossing of the Red Sea, reveal the power of Yahweh and his care for his chosen people. This cycle of tradition concludes with Israel's conquest of Canaan, fulfilling Yahweh's ancient promise to Abraham.

The Yahwist narrative is thus a most impressive demonstration of how Yahweh had guided world events from the Fall of Adam to the settlement of Israel in the land of Canaan. But, impressive though it is and influential as it has been, this sacred history is essentially a propagandist work. It was designed to show two things: that the various Israelite tribes in Canaan had a common ancestry, and that Yahweh was their ancestral god. Modern research has revealed that this version of Israel's past was composed because the real situation had been very different.

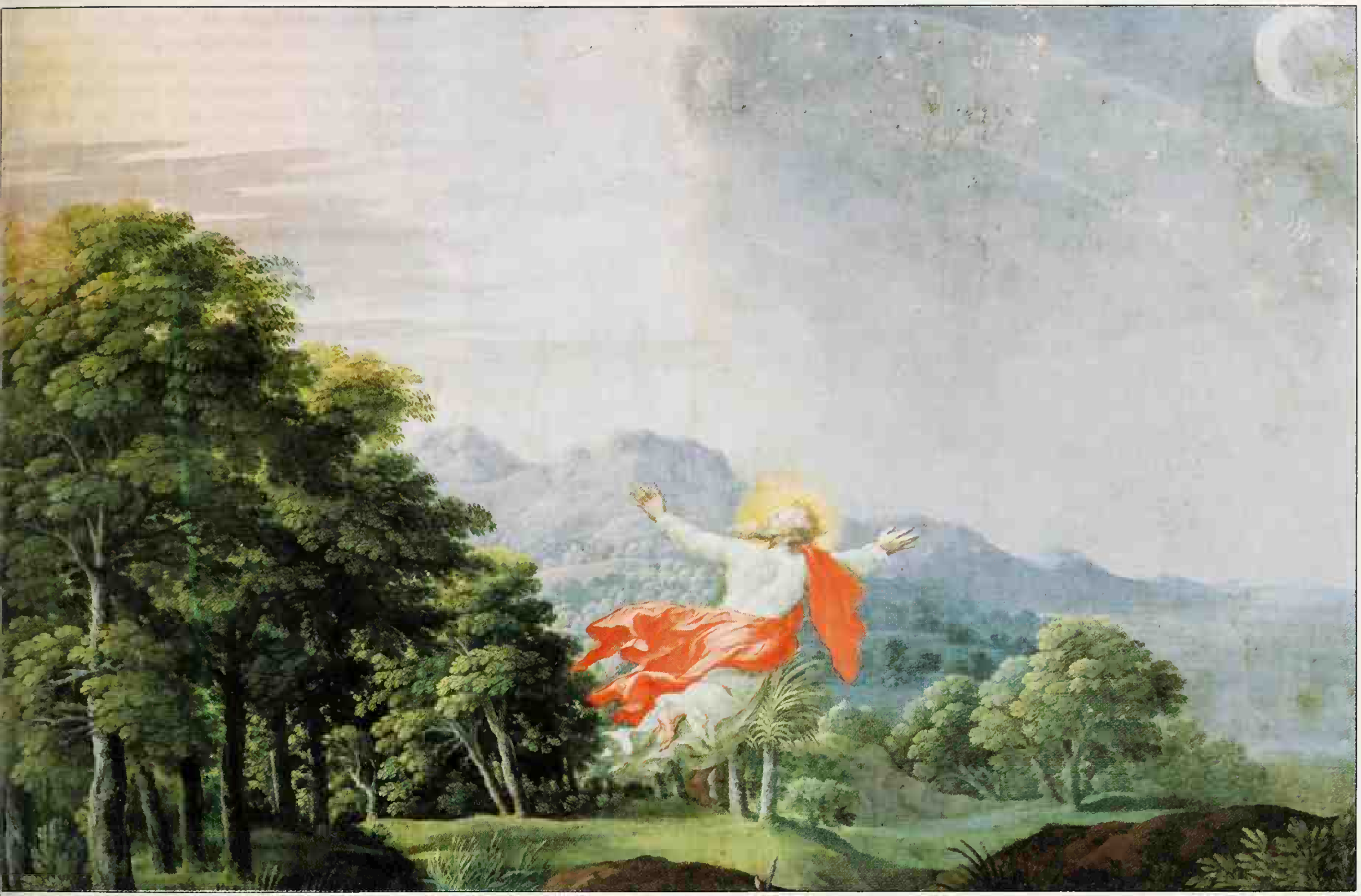
War God of the Desert

Of the three cycles of Yahwist tradition which have been outlined here, that concerning the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan is historically the most important. For it is clearly based on a firmly established memory among the Hebrews that their ancestors had escaped from servitude in Egypt and had succeeded in conquering Canaan, and that Yahweh had been essentially connected with these momentous events. There was also a memory that the cult of Yahweh had started with a covenant made at Mount Sinai, in which Moses was the mediator between Yahweh and the Israelite tribes.

After much study of the traditions concerning the exodus and the conquest of Canaan, modern scholars have reached something like the following interpretation of the historical events which lie behind them. It would appear that certain Semite tribes, possibly those known as the Joseph tribes, escaped from Egypt under a leader called Moses. These tribes believed that they owed their deliverance to a war god of the desert, whom they came to know as Yahweh. This deity, who seems to have been associated with fire and storm, may possibly have been worshipped by the Kenites, a nomadic people dwelling in the desert land of Midian. The tribes, led by Moses, united with other Semite tribes for the purpose of invading and settling in Canaan. This union was placed under the patronage of Yahweh, whose prestige as a potent war god was high. Yahweh's presence among the marching tribes was located in a portable wooden ark; this ark was sheltered in a tabernacle or tent, which formed the focus of worship when the tribes encamped.

After the tribes had established themselves in Canaan the ark of Yahweh was deposited at Shiloh, which became his cult centre. However, despite the success gained under his patronage, Yahweh's hold on the allegiance of many of the tribes was insecure. Although these tribes had accepted Yahweh as the divine patron of their federation, they still remained loyal to their ancestral gods or tended to adopt the Canaanite gods. The attraction of these latter gods was great, since they were fertility deities and their help was needed by the nomadic invaders as they settled down to an agricultural economy (see VEGETATION SPIRITS). Doubtless many reasoned that Yahweh was indeed a powerful god in the desert and in war, but how could he make the corn grow in fertile Canaan?

This desertion of Yahweh was vehemently opposed by his devotees, and they were soon able to back their exhortations to loyalty by military facts. The Israelite conquest of Canaan had not been complete and the Canaanites began to fight back moreover, the Philistines who had settled in



The god of Israel, Yahweh is depicted in the first part of the book of Genesis as the divine creator of the world: *Creation of the World,* 17th century painting by Fiamminga

Scala

the coastal area became aggressive. The Israelites' original success had lain in their unity; when their tribal federation broke up, they became an easy prey to their enemies. Thus the Yahwist prophets had a strong case. They could argue that when the tribes had been loyal to Yahweh, he had fulfilled his covenant and given them victory; but when they deserted him for other gods, he had punished them by defeat. The book of Judges records the pattern of Hebrew history at this time. Israel is subjugated by its enemies; a Yahwist leader then recalls them to their allegiance to Yahweh and victory follows; but later the tribes again revert to other gods and the process is repeated.

Shrine at Jerusalem

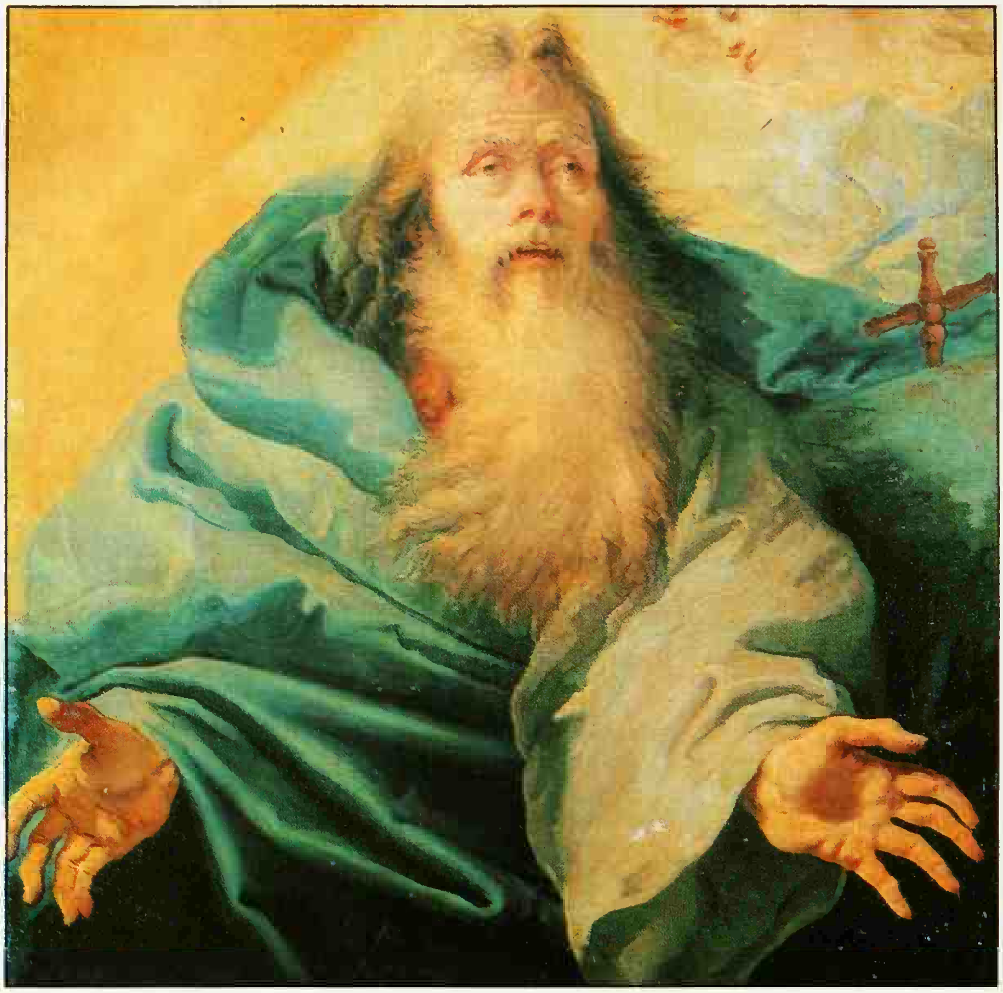
However, the persistent endeavour of the Yahwists gradually bore fruit, and under Saul and David, the first Israelite kings, the cult of Yahweh was established as the national religion. After David's capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (c 1000 BC), the Ark of Yahweh was brought there and placed in the Temple which David's son, Solomon, built for Yahweh on Mt Moriah. The place was reputed to be the site where Abraham had attempted to offer up Isaac, his son, as a sacrifice to Yahweh. Thus began Yahweh's association with that historic site, which is still commemorated in the celebrated Wailing Wall of the Jews.

The construction of a national shrine to Yahweh at Jerusalem was indeed a momentous event, and its consequences have been immense not only for the Jews but for a large part of mankind (see JERUSALEM). But it did not mean that the supremacy of Yahweh was yet assured, or that the Israelites had been consolidated into a single nation under the protection of Yahweh. Indeed, after Solomon's death the people split into two separate kingdoms: that of Israel with its capital at Samaria, and that of Judah with Jerusalem as its centre (see LOST TRIBES). Moreover, as the books of Kings show, there was still a deep-rooted tendency to worship the Canaanite gods, or to serve Yahweh with ritual practices appropriate to Baal, the Canaanite god (see BAAL; SYRIA AND PALESTINE).

It was to counteract these dangers that the Yahwist version of Israel's past, which is contained in the Hexateuch, was constructed. The intentions behind its three distinctive parts varied, but they all supported the major theme of the composition as a whole: to reveal the purpose and power of Yahweh. Thus the account of the exodus and the conquest of Canaan commemorated the two momentous events that marked the beginning of Israel's life as a nation, together with its covenant with Yahweh at Mt Sinai. The preceding Patriarchal Saga was designed to show that the various tribes which had settled in Canaan were really a homogeneous people, descended from common ancestors. It also taught these tribes that their possession of Canaan was the fulfilment of the promise that Yahweh had made to their ancestors. To this national history the Primeval History served as a most impressive introduction, revealing that Yahweh, the god of Israel, was the divine Creator of the world and had guided its affairs from the beginning for the good of his chosen people, Israel.

This Yahwist philosophy of history succeeded in its purpose. It established the idea of the 12 tribes of Israel forming a single nation, united in a common past and a common faith. It has subsequently been a major factor in preserving the national consciousness of the Jews during all the painful vicissitudes of their long history; and its influence on Christianity has been incalculable (see HISTORY).

The conception of Yahweh underwent much change during the course of centuries. In origin and nature Yahwism was an ethnic religion. It was essentially concerned with the relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people, Israel. Individual persons were significant only in so far as they affected, by their conduct, this relationship for good or ill. They could look forward to no life after death, for Yahweh had decreed man's fate when he sentenced Adam for his original sin: 'You are dust, and to dust you shall return' (Genesis 3.19). The most that was promised to the individual was that Yahweh would reward his pious service with a long life in this world, economic prosperity, and sons to inherit him. But at death the same grim fate awaited all persons, good



It was essential for the early Christians to preserve the Hebraic message of the creator god, who was active in history and who loved his world, and Yahweh was eventually transmuted into the Christian god who 'so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life (John 3.16): *God the Father* by Tiepolo

Corvina, Budapest

or bad. What survived the physical disintegration of death descended to Sheol, which was conceived as an immense pit, far below the foundations of the world, shrouded in dust and gloom (see HELL).

This view of human destiny became increasingly intolerable, as prophets emphasized that Yahweh was not only omnipotent, but also a just god, who required just dealing from his people. For experience showed that only too often it was the just who suffered in this world, while the unjust prospered. Consequently, because there was no hope of recompense after death, the justice of Yahweh was questioned. The book of Job illustrates the tension that built up for the faithful Israelite (see JOB).

When the book of Job was written, the problems of innocent suffering could not be solved since there could be no redress after death. But by the middle of the 2nd century BC belief in a resurrection and judgement of the dead had become established in Israel (see JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD). However, although this development made Yahwism a more satisfactory personal faith, the old ethnic character of the religion remained. Indeed, it became more vehemently presented owing to the worsening of Israel's political fortunes.

The basic tenet of Yahwism was that Yahweh had settled Israel in Canaan, and had consented to dwell in the Temple built for him at Jerusalem. But Israel was a small nation, and it became a victim of the power politics of the ancient Near East. Solomon's Temple was destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonian forces of Nebuchadnezzar, and the better part of the people sent in captivity into Babylonia. On the return from this exile in 538, the Temple was rebuilt on a modest scale. But the Holy Land of Yahweh continued to be controlled, except for a brief period, by foreign powers or uncongenial native rulers until its incorporation into the Roman Empire in 6 AD. One of these rulers, Herod the Great (37–4 BC), an Idumean by race and Jewish by profession, whom the Jews hated exceedingly, rebuilt the Temple on a most magnificent scale, but it failed to placate the Jews. The subjugation of Israel contradicted their ideal of it as a theocracy. This contradiction led to a fervently held belief that Yahweh would ultimately intervene, or send his Messiah, to overthrow Israel's enemies and restore its sovereignty in its Holy Land.

The belief eventually proved fatal to Israel. The yoke of heathen Rome was increasingly felt to be intolerable, and in 66 AD the people revolted (see ZEALOTS). They trusted that Yahweh would interpose with some miracle to save them. But after a bitter struggle, in 70 AD the Romans captured Jerusalem and burnt the Temple. Israel's national life in the land of Yahweh's promise ended then in awful disaster, until its restoration in 1948.

(See also HIGH GODS; JUDAISM; SKY.)

S. G. F. BRANDON

FURTHER READING: W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Eisenbrauns, 1978); S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Scribner, 1968); M. North, *History of Israel* (Harper and Row, 2nd edn., 1960); H. H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1950) and *Worship in Ancient Israel* (Fortress, 1967).

W.B.YEATS

'I HAD NOT taken up these subjects wilfully, nor through love of strangeness, nor love of excitement, nor because I found myself in some experimental circle, but because unaccountable things happened in my childhood, and because of an ungovernable craving. When supernatural events begin, a man first doubts his own testimony, but when they repeat themselves again and again, he doubts all human testimony. At least he knows his own bias, and may perhaps allow for it, but how trust historian and psychologist that have for some three hundred years ignored in writing the history of the world, or of the human mind, so momentous a part of human experience? What else had they ignored and distorted?'

The view current among Yeats's younger contemporaries during his lifetime was that, considering the nonsense Yeats took seriously, his verse was surprisingly good; T. S. Eliot, by contrast, was regarded as learned in all that it befitted a poet to know. Time has worked a reversal of that judgement: there is a tradition of spiritual knowledge which comprises a body of learning not taught in the schools, with its own great literature, besides its unwritten gnosis, accessible only to those who submit themselves, as Yeats did, to a spiritual discipline. Yeats was in his own field a learned, even a scholarly poet, though not in an academic sense.

The son of Anglo-Irish parents of Protestant stock, William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) did not inherit the Catholic faith of the nation for whose cause he worked as a member of the Young Ireland movement, and in whose parliament he afterwards became a Senator. His father, the portrait painter J. B. Yeats, a member of a Pre-Raphaelite community at Bedford Park, in London, felt no need for any religion beyond his own courteous humanism. Yeats's mother, a Pollexfen from Sligo, was imaginative rather than religious; and Yeats's sense of the supernatural was first aroused by the country people of Sligo, the paradise of his childhood.

As an art student in Dublin Yeats formed a friendship with a class-mate, George Russell (A. E.) a natural mystic and visionary (see RUSSELL). Under the influence of A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* the Dublin Hermetic Society was founded. On the invitation of this society the theosophist Mohini Chatterjee (named in a poem written many years later) came to Dublin, and from him Yeats learned the rudiments of Hindu philosophy, which remained a lifelong study. (Sri Purohit Swami dedicated to Yeats on his 70th birthday his translation of the *Gita*; and the poet collaborated with the Swami in translating the *Ten Principal Upanishads*, published in 1937.) Yeats and A.E. both became members of the Theosophical Society; in *The Trembling of the Veil* Yeats has described with amusement and sympathy his impressions on meeting Mme Blavatsky (see BLAVATSKY; THEOSOPHY).

Among his father's friends was Edwin J. Ellis, a minor poet and painter interested in esoteric matters. Blake was, during the 1880s, much in vogue in Pre-Raphaelite circles and Yeats, in collaboration with Ellis, set to work on the Blake manuscripts in the possession of the Linnell family to produce the first edition of his longer poems, the three-volume Quaritch edition (1893). The commentary is based upon the authors' esoteric knowledge; they rightly surmised that Blake had access to an esoteric tradition, though they had at that time no exact knowledge of Blake's sources. Yeats may have come to Swedenborg (see SWEDENBORG) through his Blake studies.

Education in Magic

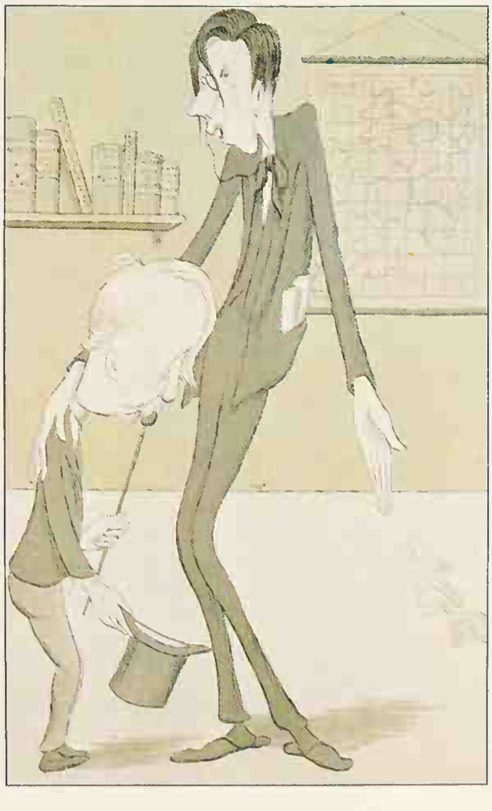
While working on Blake in the British Museum Reading Room Yeats noticed a figure who captured his imagination: S. Liddell Mathers, afterwards known as MacGregor Mathers, was copying magical manuscripts and rituals. Yeats afterwards described him as 'a learned, but not a scholarly man'. In 1887 Mathers became, with two distinguished English Rosicrucians a co-founder of the Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn (see GOLDEN DAWN). Yeats was initiated in May or June 1887 under the motto *Diabolus est Deus Inversus* (Frater D.E.D.I.). Yeats helped Mathers to write the rituals, drawing upon the Chaldean Oracles, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and (evidently Yeats's contribution) William Blake.

Yeats's fictitious figure Michael Robartes (who first appears in the early romance *Rosa Alchemica*) is no doubt based upon Mathers, 'who seemed, before I heard his name, or knew the nature of his studies, a figure of romance'. *Rosa Alchemica* describes a magical initiation, in which superhuman beings descend to dance with mortals on a marbled floor in 'an agony of trance', long afterwards recalled in the poem *Byzantium*. Michael Robartes appears again as the Initiator of *A Vision*; this work, an 'arbitrary, harsh and difficult' diagrammatic system relating historical cycles and human character to the 28 phases of the moon, resembles related systems by Eliphas Levi (see LEVI) and others, which Yeats had studied as an initiate of the Golden Dawn.

Through Yeats a number of his friends, including Florence Farr and Maud Gonne, became members of the Order. Nearly all the early members were high-minded people, including Anglo-Catholic clergymen and even for a time Evelyn Underhill, the writer on mysticism. The volumes of the ritual, since published by Israel Regardie, do not include the many essays on prayer, the Catholic sacraments, the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, Apostolic Succession and the like, circulated among adepts. The original object of the Society was, beyond the study of magical techniques of various kinds, the alchemical 'great work' of self perfection (see ALCHEMY). Subsequent quarrels arose from Mathers's dictatorial attitude and increasing interest in black magic. Yeats was the leader of the movement to throw out Mathers's pupil Aleister Crowley, who under the name and number of 'the Great Beast' of the Apocalypse openly identified himself with the Antichrist, and practised a form of sexual magic (see CROWLEY). Yeats was at no time anti-Christian, nor was sexual magic practised by the Golden Dawn.

In the troubles which followed the expulsion of Crowley, and afterwards of Mathers, other fragmentations disrupted the Order. A. E. Waite (see WAITE), author of scholarly works on the Cabala and Rosicrucianism, resigned, with a group of adherents who wished to devote themselves exclusively to spiritual development; Yeats was among those who wished to study magic. In 1901 he published a pamphlet circulated among members of the Lodge, *Is the Order of R.R. and A.C. to Remain a Magical Order?* (R.R. and A.C. stand for Rosea Rubiae and Aurea Crucis, the higher grades of the Golden Dawn). In it he urged the continuation of the strict examination system by which initiates worked their way through the degrees of adeptship. This document, written to be read by friends who shared his deepest beliefs, is perhaps Yeats's most open declaration of faith. In 1905 Yeats, Wynn Westcott and Arthur Machen resigned; the poet had been a member of the Order for nearly eight years.

Yeats's interest since boyhood in the fairy lore of Ireland, still a living tradition at the end of the 19th century, was an important element in his widespread knowledge of occult matters: *Mr W. B. Yeats presenting Mr George Moore to the Queen of the Fairies*, a caricature by Max Beerbohm



Heinemann

The Golden Dawn taught the Western esoteric tradition; the Cabala was central, and adeptship was based upon the Tree of Life and the sefiroth, to which were added the Tarot symbols, the Egyptian pantheon and other mythological equivalents (see CABALA; TAROT). Such was the real ground of all Yeats's subsequent thought: he received no formal education after leaving school; and his true education was a most thorough, serious and practical knowledge of magic and its literature, including alchemy, through the Golden Dawn, together with an introduction to the Platonic and Eastern traditions, through the Theosophical Society. In the pamphlet already mentioned he defines magic as he understood it: 'The central principle of all the Magic of power is that everything we formulate in the imagination, if we formulate it strongly enough, realizes itself in the circumstances of life, acting either through our own souls, or through the spirit of nature.'

The course of Yeats's wide and deep reading was to a great extent determined by these studies. The publications of the Theosophical Society, and publishers and authors under theosophical influence, give a good idea of the scope of his interests. The level of scholarship in this circle was high: learning remained in the hands of such scholars as G. R. S. Mead, A. E. Waite, Harold Bayley and Stephen McKenna, whose qualifications were more than academic.

Yeats also studied history, comparative mythology (the *Golden Bough* set its stamp upon a generation), works on symbolism by Harold S. Bayley and others. Among English poets he preferred the Platonists – Spenser, Shakespeare, Shelley, Blake. He was widely read in philosophy, from the Cambridge Platonists and Berkeley to Kant, Hegel, Spengler and Wittgenstein.

He was also interested in Spiritualism: he maintained a critical attitude, not from scepticism but because he understood that many explanations of the undoubted phenomena were possible. His play *The Words upon the Window Pane* is drawn from his knowledge of mediumship and seances.

A no less important tributary of Yeats's knowledge of occult matters was his interest (continuous from boyhood) in the fairy lore of Ireland, still a living tradition at the end of the 19th century. The collection of folklore by Douglas Hyde and others inspired Yeats to follow their example. *The Celtic Twilight* contains material gathered round Sligo; and he presently inspired Lady Gregory to collect similar material in Galway. In his introduction and notes to her *Visions and Beliefs* he relates folklore to the learned tradition of the Platonists and to Swedenborg. W. Y. Evens-Wentz, since famous as the translator of the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, dedicated to Yeats his first book, *The Fairy, Faith in Celtic Countries*, in which he argues that the Irish folk-beliefs are a remote memory of learned Druidism.

Yeats dreamed of establishing, with the help of Maud Gonne, a Hermetic order in Ireland, whose temple was to be in a castle on an island in Lough Key. The rituals were to be Irish in character, substituting perhaps for the Egyptian gods of the Golden Dawn, Irish gods; as he hoped to do in an epic. 'Patrick or Columcille, Oisin or Finn in Prometheus' stead; and, instead of the Caucasus, Cro-Patrick or Ben Bulben. Have not all races had their first unity from a mythology that marries them to rock or hill?'

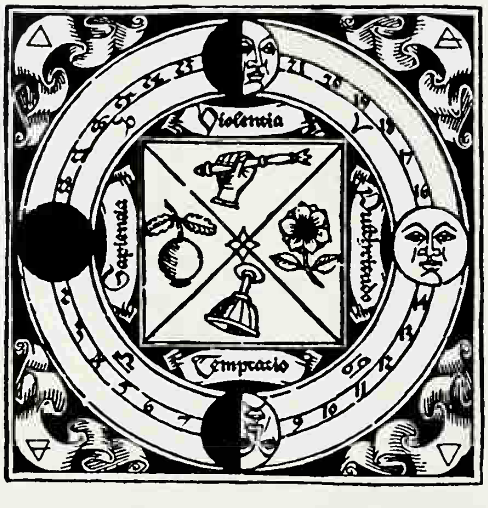
In Byzantium, a city at once Christian and Hellenic, Yeats found a symbol which seemed to epitomize the imaginative integration of 'unity of being' within that 'unity of culture' without which no true unity of being is possible to the individual. 'I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers – though not, it may be, poets, for language had been the instrument of controversy and must have grown abstract – spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people.'

To restore to the Irish nation a unity of culture founded upon a mythology expressed in works of art was the ambition of the poet; who could not endure 'an international art, picking stories and symbols where it pleased'. It was his purpose as a poet so to 'deepen the political passion of the nation that all, artist and poet, craftsman and day-labourer would accept a common design. Perhaps even these images, once created and associated with river and mountain, might move of themselves and with some powerful, even turbulent life, like those painted horses that trampled the ricefields of Japan.'

'Age-long Memoried Self'

His biographer, Joseph Hone, played down Yeats's concern with occultism, which most of his academic readers and admirers also dismiss as being either discreditable or irrelevant. Others defend their poet on the grounds that he studied magic only for the sake of his poetry; quoting in support of this too facile judgement a phrase from *A Vision* in which Instructors say, 'we have come to give you metaphors for poetry'.

The evidence is rather that Yeats regarded poetry as a special kind of magic, than magic as a special kind of poetry. In a postscript to the pamphlet already quoted he makes it clear that for him symbols are agents of power whose operation upon the unconscious mind is independent of conscious intention. 'It is a first principle of our illumination that symbols and formulae are powers, which act in their own right, and with little consideration for our intentions.' This is because such formulae act upon 'the agelong memoried self' whose Daimons 'may move through the Great Year like individual men and women and are said to use men and women as their bodies, to gather and disperse those bodies at will'; for such reasons as this Yeats told Florence Farr that 'individuality is not as important as our age has imagined'. In his *Autobiographies* he gives instances of subjects made to see visions by symbols exhibited to them in a state of trance.



A learned, even a scholarly, poet in his own field, Yeats's true education was a thorough and serious practical knowledge of magic and its literature; in *A Vision* he expounds a diagrammatic system which relates historical cycles and human character to the 28 phases of the moon, and which resembles related systems by Eliphas Levi and others: 'The Great Wheel' from the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum*, one of the illustrations in *A Vision*

As a member of a Hermetic order Yeats was under vows of secrecy; his work was grounded in a body of knowledge which he never disclosed. The rituals of the Golden Dawn have since been published, in part by Crowley and fully by Israel Regardie; but these cannot be understood by merely reading the text.

Before Jung and long before Surrealism, and with greater learning and surer metaphysical foundations than either of these or than any psychical research since undertaken, Yeats had divined the existence of a collective mind, a source of imaginative knowledge and poetic images beyond normal consciousness. It is Henry More's *anima mundi*, the oversoul, or collective unconscious. 'I know now that revelation is not from the self but from that age-long memoried self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind.'

From this collective and shared mind great poetry derives, and to that imaginative ground in each reader it addresses itself. Certain myths, images and incantations speak to the imagination with an immediacy that overlaps reason, in whoever will allow this to happen. Yeats's symbols, his incantatory speech, all his themes, are addressed to that mind; his design is to awaken recollection, in the Platonic sense of the word, by the use of symbolic images. His poetry is at once oracular and evocative. He held strong views on the declamation of verse which should be (so he held) incantatory, because rhythmic incantation also addresses itself immediately to the imagination.

Yeats believed that the evocatory power of symbols had little to do with the conscious mind. He describes how a certain diagrammatic symbol had the power of evoking visions of 'Eden', with tree, walled garden on the top of a high mountain, birds among the boughs, and from the trunk the sound of 'continual clashing of swords. Whence came that fine thought of music-making swords, that image of the garden, and many like images and thoughts? I had as yet no clear answer, but knew myself face to face with the Anima Mundi described by Platonic philosophers, and more especially in modern times by Henry More, which has a memory independent of embodied individual memories, though they constantly enrich it with their images and thoughts.'

To those who regard such symbolist art as 'inhuman' it may be replied that such is the abiding ground of our collective humanity. Symbolist art is a form of religious art; one might even say that when religious art ceases to be symbolist it is no longer religious, for it no longer joins the 'age-long memoried self' at certain moments to 'our trivial daily mind'. A demythologized religion is no longer a religion at all, since it no longer possesses the means of binding the individual self to the universal life.

Yeats is never more a symbolist than when in such occasional poems as *Parnell's Funeral* or *All Souls' Night* he relates events of national history or of personal life to that cosmic whole which alone confers upon each part its dignity and significance.

Yeats must be seen in the context of that 'revolt of soul against intellect now beginning in the world' (Yeats here uses the word 'intellect' in the sense of 'reason') of which the Theosophical Movement, Freud and Jung, the Surrealist Movement and the revival of magical studies are various aspects. Of those named it is possible that Yeats himself reached the most profound understanding, as he gave the most enduring expression, to a great reversal of the cycles of history. KATHLEEN RAINE

FURTHER READING: The principal works of W. B. Yeats are *The Collected Poems* (Macmillan, 2nd edn., 1956), *The Collected Plays* (Macmillan, 2nd edn., 1953), *Mythologies* (Macmillan, 1969), *Autobiography* (Collier Macmillan, 1966); Yeats, W. B., *A Critical Edition of Yeats' "A Vision"* (Macmillan, 1978); and *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (Macmillan, 1954); see also the official biography by Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats 1865-1939* (St Martin, 2nd edn., 1962); Mary C. Flannery, *Yeats & Magic: The Earlier Works* (Barnes & Noble, 1977) and *Yeats' Iconography* (Macmillan, 1960); G. M. Harper, ed., *Yeats and the Occult* (Macmillan of Canada, 1975).

YEW

THE EVERGREEN YEW lives to an immense age for it can continue to grow with a completely hollow centre. It has been claimed that the tree can survive for over 3000 years, but this seems unlikely. However, like other conifers, it had an ancient reputation for immortality and became a symbol of life after death. Mourners carried yew branches at funerals, which were placed in the grave; and shoots of yew were sometimes put in a dead person's shroud.

As a symbol of the Resurrection, yew was often incorporated in Eastertide church decorations and used on Palm Sunday. However, it was considered unlucky to bring it into a house, and for this reason it is not used for Christmas decorations. Because of its sacred associations, in Ireland yew wood was made into croziers and shrines. While a common yew was valued at 15 pence in the Middle Ages, a consecrated yew was worth a pound.

It was most unlucky to cut down or damage a growing yew tree; this is not surprising for the yew was among the most potent of trees for protection against evil, and was therefore often planted alongside a house, or where it might form a windbreak against the invisible wind as well as against the unknown powers of evil. Doubtless its planting in churchyards was largely to prevent witchcraft and to restrain the spirits of the buried dead.

However, Robert Turner, writing in 1664, suggested that its main function in churchyards was that it 'attracts and imbibes putrefaction and gross oleaginous vapours exhaled out of the Graves by the setting Sun, and sometimes drawn into those Meteors called *Ignes Fatui*'. Its protectiveness presumably arose from its longevity, its very tough tim-

Said to be among the most potent of trees for protection against evil, the yew was probably planted in churchyards to prevent witchcraft and to restrain the spirits of the buried dead; a symbol of life after death, it had an ancient reputation for immortality, and mourners at funerals carried yew branches which were placed in the grave: yew tree in Stoke Poges churchyard

John Moss

ber, and its red 'berries'. It was, of course, also prized for making bows, although most English bows were made from imported yew, for the native variety was often too brittle and too full of knots. The most antique wooden weapons known are early Paleolithic spears made from yew.

Unrejoicing Berries

The yew cannot be called a cheerful tree, although its autumn display of what Wordsworth called 'unrejoicing berries' is spectacular. Its churchyard affinities have given it funereal associations, and it was also considered a malign tree, perhaps because its foliage is poisonous. Because of this, and because weapons were made from it, Shakespeare referred to it as 'double fatal' *(Richard II)*. It seems likely that the 'cursed ebenon' referred to by the ghost in *Hamlet* is of yew; Marlowe also mentions 'juice of hebon' in *The Jew of Malta*. Yew forms part of the witches' brew in *Macbeth*:

> Gall of goat, and slips of yew
> Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse.

'Slivered' refers to the wind breaking branches of the trees; any branch broken in this way was unlucky and dangerous to use, for the evil spirit of the storm remained within it.

There are various other intriguing pieces of folklore about the yew. In the north of England it was used in a variant of dowsing to find lost property: the seeker held a yew branch in front of him, which led him to the goods and turned in his hand when he was by them. A very odd Scottish tradition was that a chieftain could, if holding a piece of churchyard yew in his left hand, threaten or denounce his enemy without the latter hearing. Others present did hear, however, so that it could not be said that he attacked his enemy without warning.

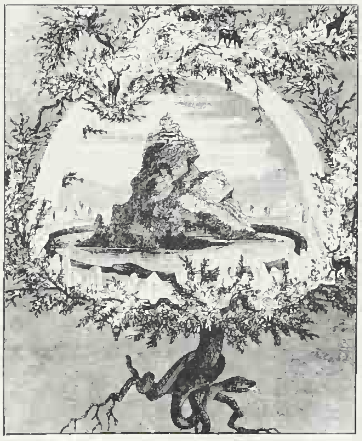
A Herefordshire belief was that if a girl placed a sprig of yew under her pillow, which she had picked in a churchyard she had not previously visited, she would dream of her future husband.

To dream of yew presages the death of some old person which will be of benefit to the dreamer. In the Victorian language of flowers yew meant sorrow.

Yggdrasil

In Scandinavian mythology, the world ash tree; standing at the centre of the universe, it connects together the heavens, the earth and the underworld; after the doom of the gods at the end of the world the man and woman who will repopulate the earth emerge from the world tree.

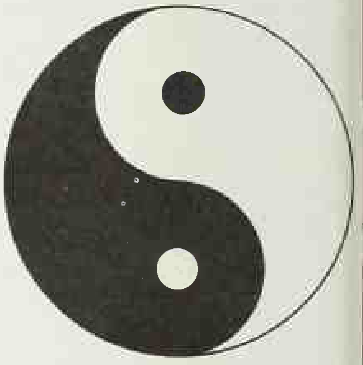
See ASH; SCANDINAVIA; TREES.



Yin and Yang

In Chinese philosophy, two great opposite principles or forces, on whose interplay everything in the universe depends; Yang is male, light and positive, Yin is female, dark and negative, and all phenomena can be classified in terms of them; in Taoism, the Tao is the principle which unites and transcends the opposites.

See ACUPUNCTURE; CHINA; DUALISM; I CHING; OPPOSITES; TAOISM.



Both a form of meditation and a practical discipline, yoga is a path to liberation from the bondage of rebirth. The best known form is hatha *yoga, which charts the course towards mystical union with the Universal Soul, through the physical body, in a long series of arduous exercises*

YOGA

ESSENTIALLY yoga is a voyage of self-discovery, for it means the linking of the lesser self with the Greater Self. Paradoxically, the Greater Self is contained within the lesser, personal self, just as the farthest horizon of an undiscovered continent is contained within the ship that rides at anchor waiting the captain's word of command. Yoga charts the course, tells how to get there, and describes what will be encountered on the way.

Yoga has sometimes been defined as a religion, and there are as many kinds of yoga as there are sects and cults in any great denomination. In this general sense yoga can mean all things to all men. It has been recommended as a method of beauty culture and a means of getting rich. Its advocates have prescribed it for migraine and falling hair, for insomnia and flatulence. The great adventure has been bypassed altogether, and yoga made into a plaything.

Nonetheless, yoga has a more conservative meaning. It is a system of philosophy; one of the six recognized systems of orthodox Hinduism (see HINDUISM). The other five are concerned with logic (this is called *Nyaya*), with physical concepts like space, time, causality and matter (*Vaisheshika*), with the objects of abstract philosophical inquiry (*Samkhya*), with ritual (*Mimamsa*), and with the metaphysics of the Ultimate Principle (*Vedanta;* see VEDANTA). But yoga is not a philosophy in the ordinary sense, and a yogi is not a mere 'knower of words'. It is essentially practical, and its discipline down to earth.

The chief textbook on yoga and the first systematic presentation of its philosophy is found in the work of Patanjali, who lived in the 3rd century BC. He is not regarded as the founder, only as the codifier of a doctrine that had already been in existence in India for about 1000 years before his time. He set forth its philosophy in a series of *sutras*, aphorisms or brief sentences, which in the course of centuries, have been subject to considerable interpretation.

As yoga evolved a number of subsidiary systems were added to it, many of them taking as their starting point a verse or even a phrase or word from Patanjali's sutras, and these developed along their own specialist lines, just as modern exponents speak of the 'yoga of business efficiency' or the 'yoga of marital happiness'. But the aim of all the orthodox systems of yoga was permanent liberation from the bondage of rebirth in another incarnation, and ultimate union with the Infinite. Each of these yogas was a 'path' to that goal. The powers that one might pick up along the way, such as an enhanced mental and physical power, are regarded as of no great consequence in themselves, and a preoccupation with them is a hindrance. Anyone who takes up yoga solely for the powers it might confer is disqualified from the higher teachings.

There are about ten traditionally recognized yogas, acceptable as a path to Realization. *Bhakti* yoga is the way of devotion love and faith, usually directed to God. Yoga, like most of the orthodox Hindu systems of philosophy, was originally atheistic, and even later, when a concept of of a divine soul was introduced, did not refer to God in the ordinary sense as Creator and ruler of the universe. He was only one, albeit the chief, of a whole class of souls (according to Nyaya philosophy), or the fashioner of the world out of material elements which were already in existence (according to Vaisheshika), or an impersonal spirit, the animating principle which united with inert matter to form the universe (Samkhya). Mimamsa held that God was not necessary for salvation, which could be achieved by ritual acts. But bhakti yoga presupposes a personal creator who desires men's devotion and responds to their faith.

Dhyana yoga is the method of contemplation. It is a purely mental discipline, much of which is also embodied in the yoga of physical culture, *hatha* yoga, the yoga familiar to most people today. Dhyana yoga teaches mental discipline, concentration, and the forms of meditation leading to trance states, of which *samadhi* is the culmination.

There is a yoga of works and deeds called *karma* yoga, expressed in charitable acts, forgiveness, penance, asceticism. It is to be distinguished from *kriya* yoga, which is primarily concerned with religious action and ritualism, particularly as expounded in the Mimamsa philosophy. The yoga of knowledge, called *jnana* yoga, relates to the understanding of the sacred books, the *Vedas*, especially the *Upanishads*, where many esoteric doctrines are expounded. *Mantra* yoga deals with magical spells and mystic syllables and the verses of sacred lore, whose correct recitation is believed to confer supernatural gifts (see MANTRA).

In addition to these there are certain yogas concerned with the subtle plexuses of the etheric body, called *chakras*, of which one, called *laya* yoga, teaches their activation, with special emphasis on the *kundalini* (see KUNDALINI) lying at the base of the spine, hence also known as kundalini yoga. It is connected with the recitation of sacred mantras which stimulate the chakras.

Often regarded as the highest form of yoga is *raja* yoga, the royal path to spiritual perfection, which deals almost entirely with mental and psychic development leading to spiritual enlightenment. It is sometimes given the honorific title of *rajadhiraja* yoga, the king of kings yoga.

The Yoga of Physical Power

The best known of all the yogas, and the one whose practice is linked with all the procedures usually associated in the popular mind with Indian religious and occult practice is hatha yoga, the yoga of physical power, or the development of the physical body. It is yoga as commonly understood, the yoga of the cross-legged posture, of standing on the head, the yoga of the wonder-worker. Like the other yogas it follows a series of 'stages', working progressively from the easy to the more difficult. Like the others its aim is release from the bondage of rebirth, and attaining union with the Absolute. It has adopted several features of the other yogas and embodied them within its own discipline.

There are eight stages in hatha yoga, and so comprehensively are they formulated that they are usually taken as the prototype of all forms of yogic discipline. Starting with simple restraints it proceeds through a system of physical and mental culture until it reaches the final stage which cannot be taught but will be experienced by the yogi when he is ready for it. The whole course is long and arduous, and most practitioners are content to confine themselves to the earlier stages and opt for health and efficiency, leaving the Ultimate to the more aspiring.

Whatever spiritual goals may ultimately

The yoga of physical power, hatha yoga consists of eight stages which are usually taken as the prototype of all forms of yogic discipline; the third stage teaches the asanas or bodily positions which are assumed as an exercise and during meditation: statuette of a deity sitting in the lotus position. The most common of the asanas, and the simplest for people accustomed to sitting on the ground, it obviates any danger of the student falling over during trance

Musee Guimet Michael Holford

underlie yogic training, it is the physical body that is the instrument through which they are achieved, and the physical body must be trained for it. We can go through life ignoring our 'soul', indeed even denying its existence, without doing ourselves apparent harm; we may neglect the intellectual side of our personalities and still savour a great deal of life without detriment to ourselves. But the physical, or gross body of flesh and blood, makes insistent demands on us. Breath is needed every few seconds; food every few hours; sleep once a day. And unless the body receives this recurrent sustenance and replenishment it will demand attention in such a manner that all other considerations will have to be subordinated until it is satisfied.

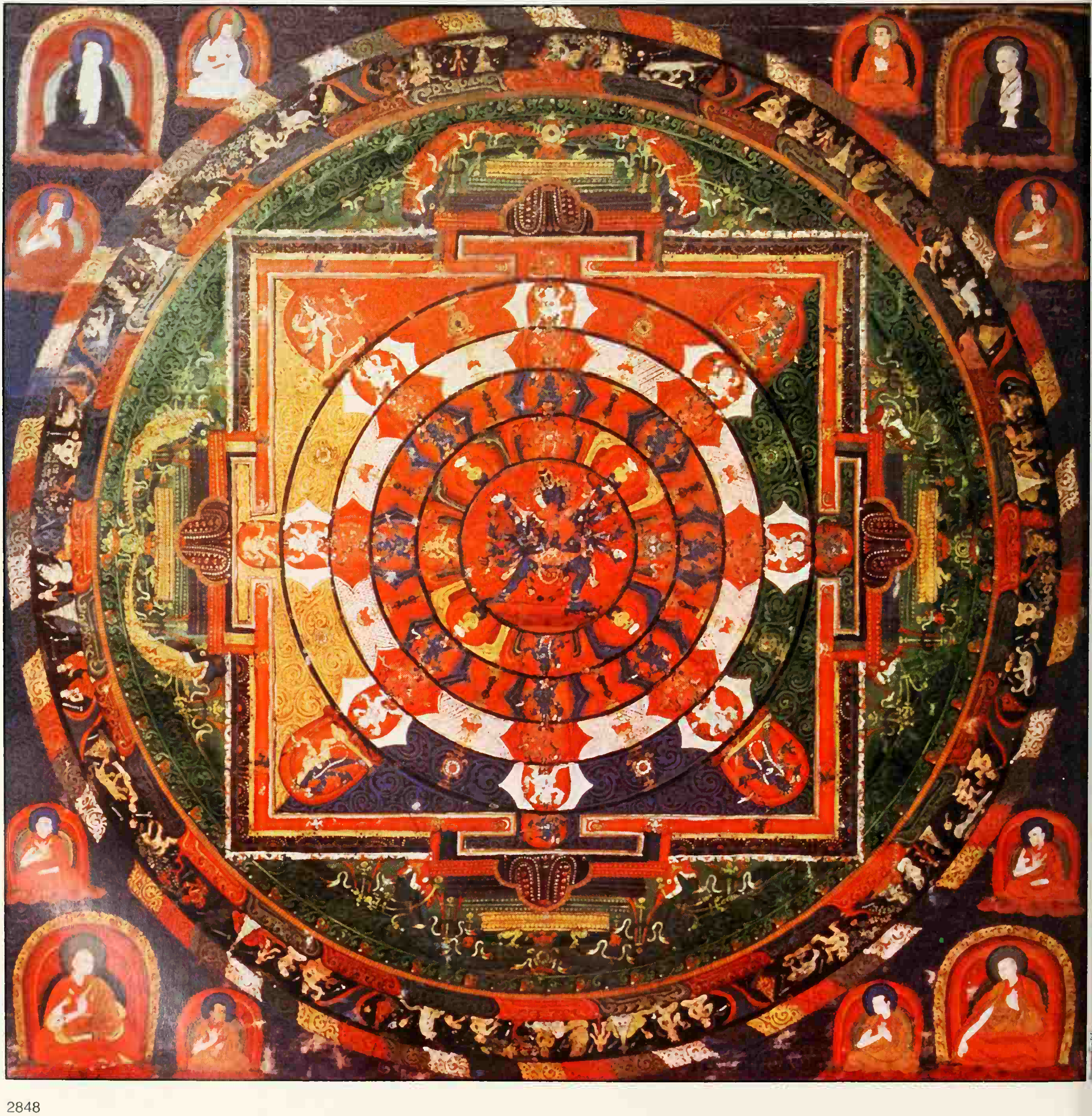
Therefore, even though the aim of yoga might reach beyond and above the range of the physical, we have to begin at the beginning, that is, on the physical plane. Our attitude to worldly and unworldly matters has to be settled and our priorities fixed and it is in the arrangement of these that hatha yoga has laid down its eight stages.

The first two preliminary stages are called *yama* and *niyama*, and are to do with external and internal control. They cover the ethical rules governing personal and social conduct, and various methods of self-discipline connected with non-injury, continence, equanimity and right thinking.

Non-injury, or *ahimsa*, implies a restraint on all aggressive emotions, such as hatred, anger, jealousy, revenge. It totally forbids physical injury to any living thing and this idea lies behind the dietary prohibition against the eating of meat. The true yogi is a vegetarian, and a pacifist. One should not 'flail one's arms about', in case one injures someone standing near by. One should not even think in violent and aggressive terms.

Ahimsa is closely connected with the idea of equanimity, which is one of the basic tenets of the Hindu ethical code. It means that a person should be tranquil in the face

Executed in combination with breathing techniques, the recitation of mantras, and mandalas or mystic diagrams, asanas are believed to draw down etheric forces from the invisible world which imbue the body of the student with power: mandala, 17th or 18th century



of every provocation, defeat, personal and financial loss, indignity, insult. It is the mark of self-conquest, to be acquired long before the regular yogic disciplines are undertaken. It is to be learned in the school of life, as a householder or man of affairs. Anger, desire to avenge an insult or redress a personal injury, retaliation, are all marks of pride. According to the great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, only the fool imagines that anger or indignation are signs of energy or of the superior man. A man given to anger is a man in chains, not a free person. Self-restraint or self-control are aimed at in the early stages, but as one advances even these fall short of the true ideal, for they imply the existence of emotions that need restraining. True equanimity is the absence even of the seeds of anger.

Another item usually included in the yama and niyama exercises is *brahmacharya* or abstinence from sex, and this is generally insisted on for those who desire to devote themselves totally to the spiritual life. But for all persons, irrespective of their occupation, moderation in sexual activity is of the highest importance. Married people are enjoined to guard against self-indulgence. Aspirants to the higher reaches must abstain altogether, for while sex has its proper place in the life of the householder, it is considered a definite hindrance to the higher life. The lawgiver Manu said, 'Irresistible power comes from chastity.'

For the man of the world yama and niyama present an eminently rational way of life. Certain things are essential, but our attitude to them must be reasonable. Food is necessary but not greed; sex but not sensuality; self-respect but not arrogance.

The Beneficial Headstand

The third stage in hatha yoga teaches the *asanas* or bodily positions, the postures assumed both as an exercise and during meditation. Patanjali said that the best posture was one that was 'firm and pleasant', that is, fit for its purpose and not uncomfortable. Yogic meditation involves long periods of motionless sitting and it is partly to accustom the student to a fixed and easy position in which he can remain longest without discomfort that the basic yogic asanas have been devised.

Many of the positions involve great bodily contortion, and though the practice of such devious attitudes is frowned upon by the adept, it is with these asanas that most people associate yoga. The exponent with his legs twisted about his neck or in some other peculiar stance is the traditional Western image of the yogi in action.

Asanas are called after their supposed resemblance to some object, plant or animal. There are asanas named after the lion, the bull, tortoise, frog, fish, scorpion, lotus, plough, wheel and sun, and many other such things. The names are bestowed on them partly to describe their appearance and also to suggest the quality they impart. The asana named after the swan gives one discrimination, for this is the chief attribute of that bird; the asana named after the frog gives one the main quality of this animal, which is strength of purpose.

In the *simhasana*, or lion pose, the yogi bends his legs till the knees touch the floor and places his hands on his knees. He protrudes his tongue as far out as it will go, stares at its tip, and then tenses the shoulders, arms and neck, making the whole frame taut so as to give the body the appearance of a fierce lion. This asana gives one leonine attributes.

The most common of yogic asanas is the well-known cross-legged pose called the *siddha* (power) asana and, in a slight variation, the *padma* (lotus) asana. This is the squatting position, with legs crossed. To people who are accustomed to sitting on the ground this is the simplest of all the asanas, although it presents some difficulty to those who have never tried it. It is a very stable posture, which enables one to keep the spine straight and obviates any danger of falling over and injuring oneself.

Another popular posture is the *shirsha* asana or 'head position', the ordinary headstand, which is done in several ways. The simplest method is to stand facing the wall, a convenient distance away from it, to bend forward till the head touches the ground, and finally to throw the legs up till they touch the wall for support. The legs are then shifted off the wall and the body straightened out. There are numerous variations on this.

The headstand pose is one of great antiquity. As an occult exercise it was known to the early Taoists of China (see TAOISM) who recommended it as a means of making certain subtle fluids descend to the head in order to 'repair the brain'. The mysterious sect of the Cabiri of Greece practised the headstand as a sacred rite, and the statue of a woman standing on her head in a Cabiri shrine aroused the uncontrollable laughter of the Persian king Cambyses II (d. 522 BC) who could not understand what the inverse attitude had to do with religion. In Europe standing on the head was long recommended as a cure for colic.

In yoga the purpose of this asana is to reverse the direction of the flow of certain fluids running in the internal channels of the body and direct them to the hidden reservoirs of the brain. The perfect execution of the headstand is said to be a profound mystery for it unites 'upper with lower', 'running with still', and 'male with female' in the 'nuptial chambers' situated in the cranium. The fluids become etherialized and then ignite, so that a state of illumination may be reached through this asana alone, if one knows the hidden art.

Many blessings attend its proper performance. In addition to the physical benefits of longevity, youthfulness and sexual vigour, and the intellectual benefits of an improved memory, great concentration and increased will-power, the spiritual blessings include the ability to perform miracles and fly through the air. This latter has been interpreted to mean that the adept can travel at will in the astral body (see ASTRAL BODY).

Associated with the asanas are certain accompanying gestures of the hand called *mudras*, which are believed to direct the latent potencies of each bodily posture by channelling them along particular paths. The hand is the focus of immense power, and certain gestures made by the hands are universally recognized as having an almost magical quality (see GESTURE). The human hand has been called the second brain and the visible part of the mind. Benedictions are bestowed by the hand. Diseases are healed and strength communicated by the laying on of hands. Gestures of anger, appeal, supplication, and command are familiar throughout the world. A hand gesture not only articulates and concentrates the internal forces and directs them outwards, it also receives power from the invisible world. It is the channel of communication between the two worlds.

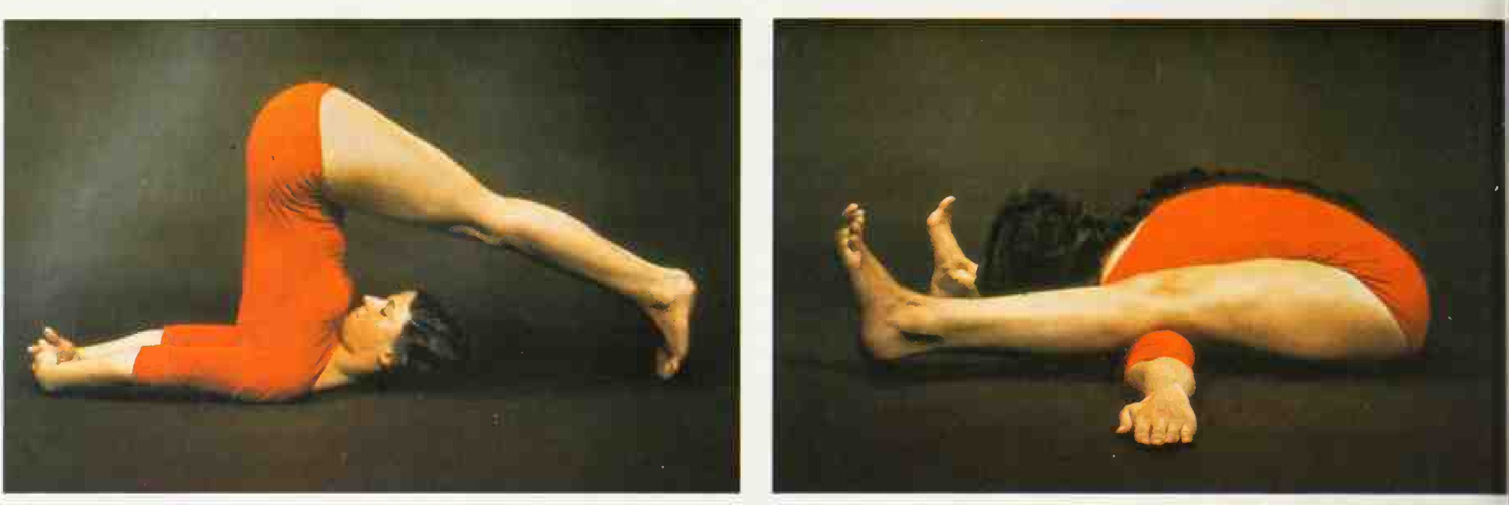
Pranic Winds

In their highest form yogic asanas are executed in combination with breathing techniques, with the recitation of mantras, with mudras, and with *mandalas*, or mystic diagrams (see MANDALA). In such an asana the whole body becomes a plastic mould, as it were, a fixed symbolic pose, into which etheric forces are drawn down and poured forth from the invisible world, filling the mould represented by the asana and imbuing it with the desired power.

The fourth stage of hatha yoga is concerned with *pranayama* or breath control, which takes into account a number of factors. First, comes the simple technique of inhalation, retention and exhalation, for which a ratio has to be established. For instance, if we breathe in for the duration of six seconds, hold our breath for nine seconds and breathe out for three seconds, the ratio would be shown as 6.9.3., a ratio that is regarded as good for a specific purpose. In order to increase the efficacy of the ratio the yogi might double it to 12.18.6., and breathe with this frequency, or treble it to 18.27.9., and use this timing in his breathing. The commonest ratios are 1.4.2., or 2.5.3., or 5.4.3. Sometimes another item is added to the rhythm of inhalation, retention and exhalation, namely, retention of breath after exhalation, and we then have to add a fourth element to our ratio, thus getting 1.4.2.3., or whatever the ratio may be.

When further refinements are added to these factors, such as breathing with the mouth open or closed throughout, or with the mouth closed during inhalation and open during exhalation, or with one nostril closed with the finger, breathing shallowly or deeply, hot or cold, or inhaling and exhaling while blowing, panting, sniffing, snoring, or while making the noises of animals like barking, cooing, mooing, or roaring, the permutations are increased almost to infinity.

The full range of possibilities in pranayama has therefore never been worked out and its systems of breathing are of unending variety. The chief kinds of breathing are taught by various schools, their benefits explained in brief, and their continuance strongly advocated. As a rule the subtleties are ignored. For the important thing about breathing is not so much the manner in which it is done, as the way the breath is used, for it is believed to be a very subtle essence full of energy.



Although the ultimate aim of yoga is permanent liberation from the bondage of rebirth, the body is the physical instrument through which these goals are achieved, and its demands must therefore be disciplined and controlled before samadhi, 'final bliss', can be attained. Some of the bodily positions assumed in hatha yoga are called after the objects or animals they supposedly resemble: the 'plough' (*left*) and the 'tortoise' (*right*)

The air breathed in is not in itself the essential element utilized by the yogi, but another far more refined ingredient which is diffused in the atmosphere all round, and impregnated with a vivifying power. The air we breathe only serves as the conductor for this subtle force. This energy is called *prana*, which is generally translated as 'wind', and pranayama teaches the method of absorbing it.

Several kinds of these pranic winds or airs are distinguished, each with its own function. Prana, when taken in, moves from the lungs and lodges in the heart, and from here directs the movement of the vital airs to the other parts of the bodily frame. Pranas in their various forms are responsible for the beating of the heart, for respiration and the circulation of the blood, for digestion, speech, sleep, hunger and thirst, and all the physiological processes of the body, which are continuously activated through the subtle body. Essentially, pranayama is the controlled means by which the invisible energy of the cosmos is channelled to act directly on the physical system.

The next stage, *pratyahara*, involves a deliberate procedure of abstraction and withdrawal of the senses from the turmoil of the outside world. The obvious way to do this is to retire into quiet seclusion free from all disturbances; or to shut the eyes and ears and so prevent the sights and sounds from impinging on them. There is a specific way of performing this act, which involves the actual closing of the organs of sense.

Again, the instrument used is the body itself. One must 'block' the passages of the body by using the body, without recourse to external apparatus. A special mudra has been devised which shuts the gates of the body. The yogi sits in a cross-legged position, performs the prescribed breathing rituals, utters a few mantras, then raising his hands to his face he shuts his ears with his thumbs, his eyes with his index fingers, his nostrils with the middle fingers; the ring fingers press on the upper lip and the little fingers on the lower. With his heel he applies a firm pressure to the perineum, and thus effectively seals the chief orifices of his body.

But this gesture is only a symbolical rite, and is always accompanied by special mental exercises, which eventually lead to mastery of the secret of sealing the gates without the mudra. The ordinary person may take anything up to 21 years before he can perfect the technique to such an extent that his senses are totally impervious to every sensation of sound, sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Since his sensory reactions are also effectively blocked, he remains unperturbed by anything that happens around him.

'A Flame in a Windless Place'

Next comes the stage of *dharana* or concentration, fixing the mind on a single object to the exclusion of all else. In a small way everyone has moments of dharana – the child playing with his toys, the student cramming for his examinations, the mathematician engrossed in his problem. It is also spoken of as 'one-pointedness', and a number of yogic exercises are designed to heighten one's capacity to concentrate. The purpose of dharana is to fill the mind, already emptied by pratyahara, with the thought one wishes to hold, and then to hold that thought without any flickering of consciousness. The mind must burn steadily and purely, 'like a flame in a windless place'.

Among the many different methods used to increase the powers of concentration is one called *trataka*, or 'fixing', in which the gaze is directed without blinking and with full concentration on an external object. One might start with an object far off, such as a hilltop, or a window in a distant house, or the branch of a tree. The mind must be collected and focused on the object without wavering. In time, nearer objects may be used for the purpose, and then in the quiet of the room one can mark the wall with a small dot at eye level and, sitting about six feet away from the wall, stare at it. In the case of such exercises one must think of nothing else but the dot. But concentration, being an 'inward' matter, is best achieved by exercising the mind to dwell on the body itself. Thus we have exercises concentrating on the tip of the nose, the centre of the forehead, or the navel.

The seventh stage is called *dhyana*, or contemplation and in it one must lose oneself. The operation is still 'mental', and mental forces are required to attain it. There is a total direction of thought on the goal sought. The range of subjects for dhyana is limitless for the higher adept, but is confined to certain specific items for the beginner.

Not all subjects are suitable for meditation. It is easy to concentrate on material things, and think of money, sex or pleasure, but the moral dangers of such objectives are very great. Similarly, symbols casually selected without taking into account one's religious, racial, family and personal background can also lead to spiritual disharmony. In India the matter is very simply decided. One can meditate on one's guru or mentor, or on a deity, but for the Western mind the unfamiliar character of such meditation will present difficulties, apart from the psychological barriers in the way of his acceptance of such objects to meditate upon.

Symbols too have a strong psychic dynamism and every religion charges its own symbols with its own current of power, which can be picked up by anyone who meditates on such a symbol with sufficient faith. The mandalas and mystic diagrams are all capable of putting one in rapport with the powers inherent in them. Great care has to be exercised before adopting a symbol for dhyana.

Attainment of Ecstasy

The eighth and final stage of hatha yoga is *samadhi*, which has been variously translated as trance, super-consciousness, or final bliss. This is no longer an intellectual state, for it transcends the merely mental condition of intellectual contemplation, and goes on to the state of ecstasy. The attainment of such a condition for the ordinary man is difficult in the extreme and needs long practice, for he is constantly hindered by physical and mental distractions. An uncomfortable posture will result in the mind being diverted to the aching limbs; lack of sufficient self-discipline and training will make one aware of the pangs of hunger or the need for sleep. If one has mastered the early stages of yoga sufficiently to withstand these distractions, one is faced with the distractions of the mind and spirit as one moves along the path. It is precisely in order to remove all possible sources of distraction that the stages of yoga have to be systematically followed through.

Samadhi is the mystic union of the individual soul with the Universal Soul. The earlier stages of dharana and dhyana may be defined as concrete meditation. Samadhi may be regarded as abstract meditation on the Void. The earlier stage is active; the latter is passive. The earlier is achieving, this is receiving. One is seeking, the other absorbing and being absorbed. There is no trace of mental activity, no trace of self or the ego. The fevers of the flesh are far behind, the petty emotions that perturb the soul and shatter the peace of mind. The ego is lost, the mind transcended.

True samadhi must be clearly distinguished from certain kinds of extraordinary trance states that have on occasion been achieved by practitioners of the magical arts, and that have been attested by more than one dependable witness. Some exponents have allowed themselves to be buried alive.

A well-authenticated case took place in Lahore (now in Pakistan) in 1838 in the presence of the distinguished Sikh leader, Maharajah Ranjit Singh, a British general, Sir Claude Wade, and other British officers. The man was a professional magician who made a living by feats of this kind. He took a few days to get himself in readiness by fasting and meditation and then presented himself to the distinguished gathering. He sat cross-legged on a sheet of white cloth and went into a trance, after which the corners of the cloth were drawn up and tied over his head. He was then buried, still seated, in a padlocked box, in an underground pit within a garden pavilion. The doors were locked and sealed. British soldiers stood on 24-hour guard outside. He remained in the grave for 30 days, after which the pit was dug up in the presence of the Maharajah, Sir Claude Wade, Dr McGregor and several others, and the box lifted out intact. After the man's apparently lifeless body had been gently massaged by his assistant he recovered consciousness, and two hours later was able to speak.

This kind of performance is emphatically discouraged by the true adept. But so close is the inherited association of yoga with the magical arts of the wonder-worker that the term *jogi* (colloquial adaptation of yogi) has become synonymous with the magician, and jogis have been credited with some very bizarre feats. They are the fakirs and naked sadhus of the tourist. Some of them sleep on beds of nails, or remain standing in one place, often on one leg, for several months. Some remain in the same spot throughout their lives, never moving outside the confines of the area they have assigned for themselves, which may be a tiny hut, with only a short walk for the calls of nature. Others remain submerged up to the waist in a stream for weeks on end; or sit in the open in the full blaze of the midsummer sun surrounded by five fierce fires kept alive by their disciples. Some hold the face up until the neck muscles harden and they are unable to look down upon the earth again; some reverse the position and look downwards so that the sky is no more within their normal vision. Others keep the fist closed permanently until the nails grow into the flesh (see FAKIR).

But some remarkable claims have been made on behalf of the orthodox yogi too, especially concerning the control of the physiological processes of the body. Yogis are able to suspend their breathing to an abnormal extent; show different pulse rates at will on the right and left wrists; lower the respiratory rate till it is barely perceptible; become totally immunized to the effects of heat and cold; remain in trance for days at a time; go without food and water for several weeks; exert an almost supernatural control over wild animals.

Although the exercise of the powers that come to the practitioner of yoga is regarded as an obstacle in the path towards the aspirant's spiritual progress, many people practise yoga for precisely these powers, or *siddhis* as they are called, and are not greatly concerned about the non-material benefits accruing from its practice.

There are said to be eight traditional siddhis, as follows: making oneself infinitely small; infinitely large; infinitely heavy; weightless; transporting oneself anywhere instantaneously; gaining all one's desires; controlling people; achieving overlordship over all things. Patanjali's enigmatic statement that 'Perfection may arise from birth (inherited faculty), drugs, spells, austerities or concentration', has been the subject of considerable commentary and interpretation. The inclusion of drugs has divided opinion on the matter, some suggesting that the philosopher mentioned drugs as one means of emancipation from the bondage of rebirth, others contending that he merely included them to complete the catalogue of items that could be used for the purpose of reaching samadhi, but did not give drug-taking his approval.

A matter of considerable interest to researchers in the field today is the close similarity between the powers developed by yoga and the experiences of the drug-state, particularly those induced by LSD. Drugs produce the tranquillity, provide the vision, and create the illusions of power. Subjects of LSD experiments report experiences that parallel every one of the traditional siddhis, produced as a result of visual, auditory and other sensory distortion. Session records indicate that subjects have the feeling that they have shrunk to near vanishing point, while the consciousness of others expands to such an extent that they imagine themselves 'as big as a galaxy'. Some feel that they have a vastly greater or lesser density, and become extremely heavy and virtually immovable or, in some cases, almost weightless. The feeling of being transported to other places is quite common in LSD experiments. This kind of drug-induced 'travelling clairvoyance', where the subject visits distant places, is perhaps also comparable to the flying of medieval witches, who rubbed the sensitive mucous membranes of the nasal and sexual orifices with ointments impregnated with drugs – which induced a trance – and returned with accounts of wonderful adventures at the sabbath (see FLYING OINTMENT).

The power of attaining one's desires is again met within the hallucinogenic state where the subject, depending on his personal predispositions, projects himself into his vision and thus attains what he seeks. Likewise the power to control people and the illusion of overlordship over all physical things is another commonplace of psychedelic experience, and on a smaller scale is exhibited by the subject who jumps off a tall building under the delusion that he has suddenly acquired the ability to fly; or who stands in a busy thoroughfare, steps off the pavement and wills a speeding bus to come to a halt.

But many regard these resemblances as superficial. The differences between the genuine and controlled powers acquired after many years of self-culture and the erratic hallucinations produced instantaneously by drugs are so considerable that the analogy need not be pursued any further. On the other hand it is easy to exaggerate the benefits of yoga, for it is well known that many other disciplines of physical culture and mental training can bring about the same results, and are not the monopoly of any one system of spiritual development.

Yoga is said to give one a higher IQ, exceptional sexual vigour, ESP, and even a kind of earthly immortality. Yet yogis in their prime die every year like other mortals. They are not notable for their IQs. Attempts by exponents to walk on water have always come to a watery end. And extraordinary breathing feats have been recorded all over the world from China to Peru. The ascetic disciplines of the sadhus find a parallel in the Christian desert hermits of the 4th and 5th centuries. Yogis have been buried alive, but so have Moslem sufis, and Western magicians. Yogis have walked on fire, but so have natives from the South Seas, who perform the much more difficult feat of walking on red-hot stones.

Putting the whole of the miraculous element aside, it may be said that yoga is a discipline which, in moderation and by the use of common sense, may be practised with benefit.

(See BREATH; MEDITATION; SELF-DENIAL.)

BENJAMIN WALKER

FURTHER READING: Theos Bernard, *Hatha Yoga* (Wehman); Paul Dukes, *The Yoga of Health, Youth and Joy* (Harper and Row, 1960); Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1970) S. K. Majumdar, *Introduction to Yoga: Principles and Practice* (University Books, 1967); R. E. L. Masters and Jean Houston, *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966); Lar Caughlan, *Yoga: The Spirit of Union* (Kendall-Hunt, 1981); Bhagwan Shree Patanjali, *Aphorisms of Yoga* (Faber & Faber, 1973); Vivian Worthington, *History of Yoga* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

When the Roman army entered the smoking ruins of the Zealot stronghold of Masada, mounds of corpses testified to the resolution of this Jewish sect to die rather than to recognize any other lord than Yahweh

ZEALOTS

THE EMPEROR AUGUSTUS ordered the incorporation of Judaea into the Roman Empire in the year 6 AD. The change was to prove disastrous to the Jews because, for the first time, it brought them up against the realities of subjugation to Roman rule. Other peoples had naturally resented the imposition of Roman rule as the Empire expanded: but for the Jews such subjection was not only an affront to their national pride, it profoundly affected their religion. It touched them at their most sensitive point; for they cherished the idea of Israel as a theocracy, with Yahweh (see YAHWEH) as their supreme Lord and a godly high priest as his earthly representative.

One of the first measures taken by the Romans to implement the new decree was to order a census of the population of Judaea for the purpose of taxation. The Jews had been accustomed to pay taxes to their own kings; but to pay them to Rome challenged a fundamental tenet of their religion. For it meant giving of the resources of the Holy Land of Yahweh to the heathen emperor of Rome. As soon as the new measure was known, a rabbi called Judas of Galilee incited the people to revolt – to pay the taxes, he proclaimed was an act of apostasy toward Yahweh, and tantamount to recognizing Caesar as lord (*despotes*) instead of the god of Israel.

The revolt was suppressed, and Judas was slain. But those of his followers who survived took to the deserts of Judaea, to maintain a guerilla resistance against the Romans. They became known as the Zealots, which was a Greek translation of their Hebrew name *Kanna'im*. The name probably derived from the ancient example of Phinehas, as recorded in the book of Numbers 25.6–13. Angered by the liaison of a fellow Jew with a non-Jewish woman, Phinehas had slain both. For his action he had been praised by Yahweh, 'in that he was zealous with my zeal', and a perpetual priesthood was conferred on him and his descendants, 'because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the people of Israel'.

Phinehas was thus the divinely commended prototype of the Zealots, who served Yahweh their god with a fanatical devotion, ready to resort to violent action or suffer martyrdom in his cause. Their enemies were not only the heathen Romans, who had imposed their rule on Israel, but also those Jews who collaborated with them. Such Jewish 'quislings' were mainly members of the Sadducean aristocracy, who monopolized the chief ecclesiastical offices connected with the great Temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem. From this aristocracy the high priest was chosen by the Romans, who recognized him as the head of the Jewish state for internal affairs. These sacerdotal aristocrats were not popular with the mass of their fellow-countrymen. Consequently, since their positions depended on Roman support, they co-operated with the Roman government of their land.

Suppression of the Truth

It has only been since the Second World War that the real character of the Zealot movement has been understood. There have been three main reasons for this. The excavation of the rock fortress of Masada beside the Dead Sea, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided new information about the Zealots and the background of Jewish religio-political thinking at this time (see DEAD SEA SCROLLS). Then, the 'resistance' movements in Nazi-occupied countries during the Second World War have promoted a more sympathetic insight into the Zealot 'resistance' against ancient Rome. These factors, in turn, have led to a more critical evaluation of what Josephus, the Jewish historian of the 1st century, wrote about the Zealots. Josephus is our chief informant concerning the Zealots; but it is now realized that he denigrated them for personal reasons. In the war against Rome which started in 66 AD, Josephus deserted to the Romans, and later wrote an account of the war for his Roman patron, the Emperor Vespasian. In this account, Josephus blames the Zealots for the war, representing them as evilly-disposed desperadoes who would stop at no atrocity to force their peaceably-minded countrymen to revolt against Rome. His favourite term for them was *lestai* ('brigands'), which was undoubtedly also how the Romans described them. He conceals the fact that the Zealots were patriots, and that their actions were inspired by their intense devotion to Yahweh, the god of Israel.

Owing to the apologetical character of Josephus' account of Jewish affairs during this period, it is impossible to trace out the development of the Zealot movement. However, the Christian gospels afford some significant evidence, although this is also of an enigmatical kind. Thus it is recorded that one of the apostles chosen by Jesus was 'Simon the Zealot' (Luke 6.15); but Mark tries to disguise the fact by giving only the unexplained Aramaic equivalent 'the Cananaean' for 'the Zealot' (Mark 3.18). Jesus was also implicated in some way with Barabbas, a Zealot leader of a rising against the Romans (see JESUS); and Pontius Pilate ordered Jesus to be crucified between two *lestai*, who were doubtless Zealots captured in the recent rising in which Barabbas was involved.

Like other resistance forces, the ancient Zealots adopted guerilla tactics in operating against the Romans and their Jewish collaborators from hide-outs in the desert areas of Judaea and Galilee. They probably had the sympathy and clandestine support of the mass of their own countrymen, whose social interests and antipathies they shared. It is significant that one of their first acts, on gaining control of Jerusalem in 66 AD, was to burn the public archives which contained the money-lenders' bonds – in order, so Josephus complains, to encourage the poor to rise against the rich; a sympathy showed also by Jesus.

Death Before Surrender

The Zealot movement seems to have had a dynastic leadership. After the death of Judas of Galilee, the founder, in 6 AD, his sons apparently organized the movement; for Josephus records that the Roman governor Tiberius Alexander, during his term of office in 46–8 AD, crucified Jacob and Simon, sons of Judas. At the beginning of the revolt in 66 another son, Menahem, assumed the leadership, and the last surviving Zealots at Masada were commanded by a descendant of Judas, named Eleazar.

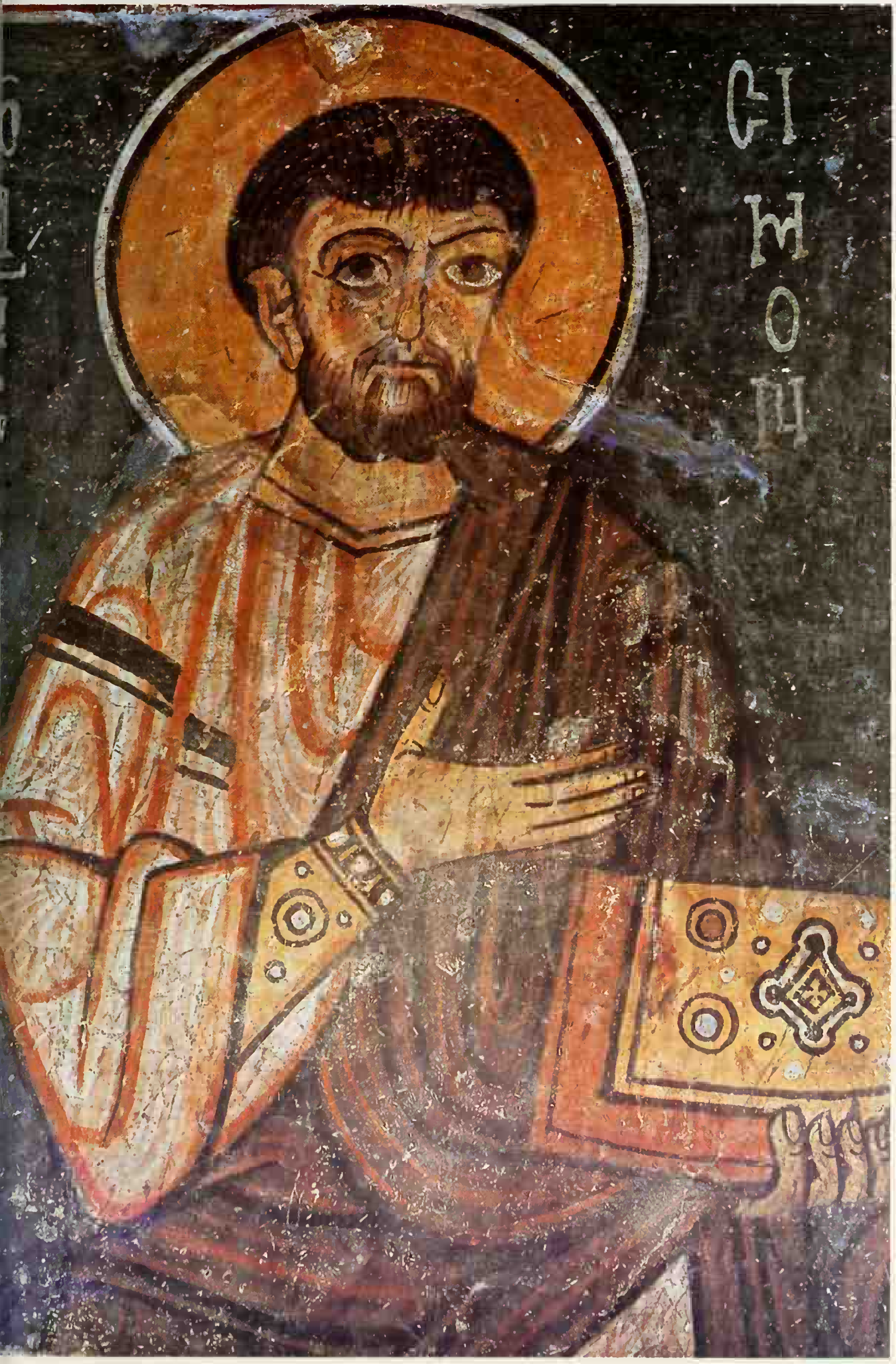
Capture by the Romans usually meant crucifixion for a Zealot. It is probable that he warning given by Jesus of the likely consequences of joining his movement already had a Zealot currency: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (Mark 8.34). In Judaea at that time crucifixion was the Roman penalty for sedition. t is significant that Josephus also records hat the Romans tortured Zealots to make hem 'acknowledge Caesar as lord'.

According to Josephus, a new group of Zealots appeared when Felix was the Roman governor (52–60 AD). They were called 'Sicarii', or daggermen, from the *sica* or dagger with which they were armed. They were evidently formed as a terrorist group to carry out clandestine assassinations, particularly of notable Jewish collaborators with the Romans. Concealing their daggers in their loose garments, they struck at their victims in crowded places – thus they killed the high priest Jonathan in the Temple.

During the 60 years from 6 to 66 AD, Jewish history has the appearance of a Greek tragedy moving relentlessly to its fatal climax. Even if the Roman procurators of Judaea had been consistently wise and just in their rule, it is unlikely that the Jews would ever have settled down quietly as subjects of heathen Rome. For the fundamental tenets of their religion forbade their recognition of any other sovereign lord of Israel than Yahweh. These tenets the Zealots fanatically maintained, and their exhortations to their fellow Jews were powerfully reinforced by the evidence of Roman injustice and such outrages as the attempt of the Emperor Caligula in 39–40 to place his image, in the form of Zeus, in the very sanctuary of Yahweh at Jerusalem.

The final explosion came in 66 AD, when the lower order of the priests, who were infected by Zealotism and persecuted by the sacerdotal aristocracy, refused to offer the daily sacrifice in the Temple for the well-being of the Roman emperor and people. These sacrifices were regarded as signifying Jewish loyalty to Rome, so that their cessation was tantamount to rebellion. The aristocracy endeavoured to restore the situation by force, and fighting broke out. The rebel priests were soon reinforced by the Zealots. Opposition was wiped out, and the Roman garrisons in Jerusalem and elsewhere were massacred. Once in possession of the Temple, the Zealots elected a new high priest according to the directions of the Torah.

St' Simon, 12th century wall painting in Cappadocia; one of the apostles chosen by Jesus, he is described in St Luke's gospel as 'Simon the Zealot'



Sonia Halliday

The first Roman attempt to suppress the revolt in 66 failed disastrously, and encouraged the Jews to believe that Yahweh would save them. It took four years of bitter fighting before the Romans could capture Jerusalem. In the final assault on the city, the Temple, which was fiercely defended by the Zealots, was burnt. The fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD was fated to mark the end of the Jewish national state in Palestine until its re-establishment in 1948. The Jewish overthrow is commemorated in the sculptured panels of the Arch of Titus in Rome, where the exultant legionaries are shown bearing the spoils of the Temple in triumph through the streets of the capital.

The final drama of Zealot resistance was, however, played out at Masada, on the shores of the Dead Sea. There a Zealot garrison, with their families, held out until 73 AD. When the Romans, by a prodigious feat of military engineering, at last succeeded in breaking the walls, the Zealots preferred suicide to surrender. The men killed their wives and children; then they drew lots for the order in which they themselves should be killed by their comrades. Finally, on that fatal night, the last remaining Zealot, having seen that all were dead, set fire to the fortress and killed himself. The next morning, when the Romans entered the smoking ruins, 960 corpses testified to Zealot resolution to recognize no other lord than Yahweh, the god of their fathers.

S. G. F. BRANDON

FURTHER READING: The best edition of the works of Josephus, including Greek text and English translation, is published in the Loeb Classical Library; vols 1–3 concern the Zealots. See also: S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester Univ. Press, 1967); Y. Yadin, *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966).

ZEN

An emphasis on direct intuitive experience characterizes Zen, a conviction that penetration to the heart of life's meaning cannot be brought about by the mind alone; unexpectedly to the Western mind, its deeply serious truths are often conveyed in humour and also in seeming irreverence

ZEN is a Chinese-Japanese branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Although nowhere within the boundaries of its special teachings is there demanded faith in a God external to the universe who has created the cosmos and man, nor is there any single sacrosanct collection of revealed scriptures to be venerated like the Christian Bible or Hinduism's *Vedas*, Zen followers and teachers nevertheless consider Zen a religion. In their view, Zen's form of Buddhism is a natural, indeed inevitable development from such challenging and iconoclastic statements by the founder of this major world faith as 'Look within, *thou* art the Buddha'. Zen is concerned with teaching that all men, with disciplined individual effort, are capable of attaining the Buddha's Enlightenment, known as *satori* in the Zen vocabulary.

Zen's emphasis, in the present as well as the past, falls on specific meditative practices designed to 'see into one's nature', a descriptive phrase attributed to one of the most important figures in the annals of early Zen, the Chinese master of the 7th century, Hui-Neng (638-713; in Japanese, Eno). The late author and scholarly authority on Zen Buddhism, D. T. Suzuki, called Hui-Neng's statement 'the most significant phrase ever coined in the development of Zen'. Some 13 centuries have passed since Hui-Neng uttered these words but they remain as basic to Zen teaching as they were when he spoke them, and it is this phrase, and others similar to it, that have turned a number of Western psychoanalysts and psychiatrists – including

Although one of the characteristics of Zen is a zany sense of humour this springs from the wish to avoid self-conscious religiosity or smugness about spiritual attainment, and it has not stopped Buddhists from prostrating themselves in front of Buddha images as an act that 'horizontalizes the ego-mast': statue of Buddha in Kamakura, Japan

Carl Jung, Erich Fromm and Karen Horney – to a serious study of Zen methods in relation to their own interests in the attainment of self-knowledge. Existentialists, also, of the stature of Martin Heidegger, have claimed to find in ancient Zen writings some of the very ideas they have been developing in modern times.

The recent phenomenon of a steadily growing interest in Zen teachings in Europe and the United States arises, it has been suggested, in part because Zen's emphasis on 'finding out for oneself' appeals to modern people who have difficulty accepting fixed dogma or traditional religious authority in a world now in scientific and philosophic flux. It is not only Japanese *roshis* (venerable spiritual teachers) but Westerners as well who, after training in Japanese monasteries, are today carrying to the West Zen's interpretation and extension of original Buddhist teachings. Through body-mind techniques of 'quiet sitting' as well as through the challenge of the dynamic conundrum known as the *koan*, Zen aims to establish unshaken personal faith in life's 'Is-ness', the universe seen as an indissoluble unity, a single totality of which man is but a part.

The Growth of Zen

In Buddhism's slow but irresistible spread over all Asia the Mahayana branch of teaching reached China around 525 AD. From China in time it moved on to Korea and to Japan, acquiring, in the usual flexible Mahayana style, certain colorations from the cultures encountered in its passage (see BUDDHISM; JAPAN).

The ancient Indian mystic roots, along with strong pragmatic and humanistic influences that came from China, the land of Confucius and Lao-Tze, are so clearly traceable in Zen's development that Zen as known today might be fairly described as a unique blend of Indian mysticism and Chinese naturalism sieved through the special mesh of the Japanese character. The very origins of its name indicate its historical genesis. Zen is the Japanese way of writing and speaking the Chinese word *ch'an*, which is a transliteration of the Sanskrit word *dhyana*, meaning meditation or, more fully, 'contemplation leading to a higher state of Consciousness' or 'union with Reality'.

It was in the 12th century that the special development of Buddhist philosophy known in China as ch'an was definitely established in Japan under the name of Zen. Prior to this date, however, there had been a significant exchange of Buddhist monks and teachers between the two countries; a traffic of inestimable importance not only to Japanese culture but to the history of Zen philosophy and the world's art.

These religious emissaries acted, in effect, as disseminators and preservers of Chinese civilization at its brilliant height in the great Sung Dynasty. When the Sung idyll was brought to its end by an invasion of Mongols, Japan escaped the invaders and thus became the sanctuary not only for the scriptures and teachings of a new-old, India-born, Chinese-influenced philosophy but for its intimately related arts as well.

So allied with Zen philosophy is its unique aesthetic that one cannot separate the two and still have a profound comprehension of Zen's underlying precepts. This is true in particular of those swiftly executed 'spontaneous' ink paintings which manage to express with consummate subtlety both a passionate love of Nature and a singular harmony with it. Waterfalls, mountain peaks, birds, stones, flowers, bamboo, pines in mist, all speak of a hidden Unity, of the belief that the Buddha nature is immanent not alone in man but in everything that exists, animate or inanimate.

The traditional culture of Japan is grounded in Zen perceptions which have been preserved, encouraged and practised in an amazingly pure stream of transmission right up to modern times. Qualities such as naturalness, simplicity, tranquillity, asymmetry, emptiness, are expressed in Japanese plays and poetry, in flower arrangement (a highly regarded art in Japan), in *sumi* ink painting and calligraphy, in the subject matter and performances of the traditional theatre, in the design of gardens and house interiors. The room in which the tea ceremony is held, for example, is known as 'the abode of vacancy' and taking tea might be fairly described as a Zen practice in unfaltering awareness and joy in simple objects. The precise disciplines of judo, archery and ceremonial swordsmanship are also rooted deep in Zen. Most importantly the stripped-down, evocative 17-syllable Japanese verse form known as *haiku* affords special clues to the Zen state of mind:

> The water-fowl
> Lays its beak in its breast
> And sleeps as it floats.
>
> An old pine tree preaches wisdom
> And a wild bird is crying truth.
>
> How marvellous, how miraculous
> I draw water,
> I gather fuel.

What is being said in lines like these is that one should come to rest in the great Emptiness, that in every moment of life there is chance for enlightenment and that in the very seeming commonplaceness of existence one may discover the deepest mystery and wonder.

Buddha's Truth Beyond Words

Zen claims to be the direct inheritor of principles of thought and behaviour first promulgated by the historic Buddha (see GAUTAMA BUDDHA). In the 6th century BC the Buddha preached a new doctrine of a Middle Way of Understanding. He taught that certain methods of thought and behaviour could lead a follower to freedom from attachment to objects and to the eventual release from that cramping and illusory sense of a special self or ego which, cutting off man from his fellows and from all other forms of life, gave human existence its tragic tone.

The Buddha's illuminating perception that he was, in a strictly personal sense, 'nothing' and 'no-body', and thus his profound realization of the indescribable, existential indivisibility or One-ness of all life, freed him forever from the fetters of *maya* (illusion) and from the necessity for rebirth or participation in the ceaseless round of 'becoming'. At this point in the spiritual history of Buddhism it is assumed that the Enlightened One might of his own volition have left the physical plane. Instead, after a period of doubt and uncertainty, he accepted the sacrifice and responsibility of going forth to try to teach the unteachable; a truth that could not be described in words, that must instead be individually experienced as he had experienced it in his own moment of supreme clarity while seated under the Tree of Wisdom.

The Bodhisattvas

It is this act of profound selflessness on the part of the historic Buddha which has led to the development in Mahayana Buddhism of the theory of Bodhisattvas, enlightened beings who have taken the vow to postpone their own release in order to assist all other creatures in the attainment of Nirvana, a state of total inner Peace and Freedom, or, in other words, Buddhahood itself (see NIRVANA). Although this profoundly mystical and, in a sense, paradoxical concept of Bodhisattvas as personifications of the highest wisdom and compassion did not originate in Zen, they preside in spirit over Zen halls of instruction and meditation, and the chanting of a Bodhisattva's four vows of dedication to the Buddha's Way are a part of each day's routine in teaching centres and monasteries.

Sculptured or painted forms of such great Bodhisattvas as Kuan-Yin (in Japanese, Kwannon), Manjusri, Maitreya (Miroku) and others are found in the priceless art collections of the Zen monasteries, and are numbered among Japan's greatest national treasures. In old Chinese and Japanese art one can even find the Buddha himself depicted as a Bodhisattva, notably in such a moving masterpiece as the 12th century Chinese painter Liang K'ai's picture of the Great Teacher leaving the mountain top of his Enlightenment, preparing to descend again into the world. Shown as a worn, weary, shabby ascetic, he stares down with an expression of profound questioning into the valley below, where he must now go on his self-determined mission to carry a light into the 'darkness of the world'.

From the annals of early Indian Buddhism, Zennists pluck certain stories which to them represent the very crux and significance of Buddhist teaching. One is the Buddha's rebuke to a disciple who kept demanding intellectual answers to such questions as the nature of the First Cause, life after death and similar insoluble mysteries. To this typical sophist the Buddha remarked that his demands were comparable to those of a man who refuses to leave his burning house until he has found out who set the house on fire; or like a man who, shot with a poisoned arrow, will not remove it until he has ascertained all the facts about the arrow's source. In other

words, speculation can only lead to further speculation, with no possibility of any final solution; individual penetration to the heart of life's meaning cannot be brought about by the mind alone.

The Silent Sermon

The second story in this general style describes the Buddha's so-called Silent Sermon, to a Zennist perhaps the most eloquent of all the Buddha's discourses. On one occasion before a great gathering of followers and disciples, the Buddha sat without speaking, turning a flower quietly in his hand. Some of the versions relate that he regarded the flower with joy, that he even broke into laughter. As he, without words, turned the flower in his hand he also looked into the faces of his followers waiting for a flash of understanding. At last it came. One disciple, Kasyapa, smiled, a serene inward-turning smile of awareness which told the Buddha that he had really seen the flower, had grasped that 'which goes beyond the Word'.

'The True Flower'

It is significant that this perceptive disciple was subsequently chosen by the Buddha as his successor in the role of teacher. It is also worth mention in passing that to this day a canon of judgment brought to bear on Japan's ancient Zen-rooted Noh drama is whether a performance does or does not possess 'the true flower', in other words express that which is ineffable, indescribable yet communicable and capable of being intuitively experienced. This basic Zen emphasis on an understanding that lies outside verbalism has been put succinctly in a famous four-line statement:

> A special transmission outside the Scriptures;
> No dependence upon words and letters;
> Direct pointing to the soul of man;
> Seeing into one's own nature and thereby
> attaining Buddhahood.

These four lines, expressive of the very essence of Zen, might be said to find their original embodiment in a semi-legendary missionary monk from India known as Bodhidharma (in Japanese, Daruma). The date of his first appearance in Zen annals is uncertain but we are told that Buddhism was already established in China when he arrived. It is related that he came all the way from India, a journey of incredible hardship, with the sole purpose of restoring to Buddhism its original directness and meaningful simplicity; to teach Buddhist followers that 'the finger pointing at the moon was not the moon [Enlightenment] itself.'

Although the precise date of Bodhidharma's arrival in China is lost in the mists of time, we do know the dates (502-550) of the devout Buddhist Emperor Wu Ti who received him in private audience. It can be assumed therefore that, sometime around the middle of the 6th century, a most important dialogue took place between the devout emperor and his noted visitor from the sacred land of the Original Teacher. The significance of this perhaps apocryphal conversation lies in the fact that it has set the tone for many hundreds of Zen dialogues, commentaries, *mondo* ('question and answer'), and koans, those apparently senseless Zen conundrums which do not lend themselves to solution by ordinary thought processes, and which are in fact deliberately designed by their nonsensical formulation to break down habitual mental patterns.

The Zen belief that the Buddha nature is immanent not only in man, but in everything that exists, animate or inanimate, is reflected in the traditional culture of Japan; qualities such as tranquillity and emptiness are expressed in the design of gardens and house interiors, in plays and poetry *Above* Sand garden in Kyoto, symbolizing the sea *Below right* A temple garden, also in Kyoto

Vast Emptiness

The emperor began the interview with Bodhidharma by describing his personal efforts on behalf of the newly transplanted religion, Buddhism. He told of the many temples he had built, the scriptures he had ordered copied, the special privileges he was granting Buddhist monks in his kingdom. What special merit, he wished to know, had accrued to him from these activities. Without hesitation Bodhidharma bluntly replied, 'No merit whatsoever.'

The astonished but not yet daunted emperor went on to inquire which among the holy teachings his learned visitor con-

Zen teachings stress that it is not possible to take hold of the true merely by abandoning the false, nor can one reach peace of mind or any final answer by argument or the use of logic

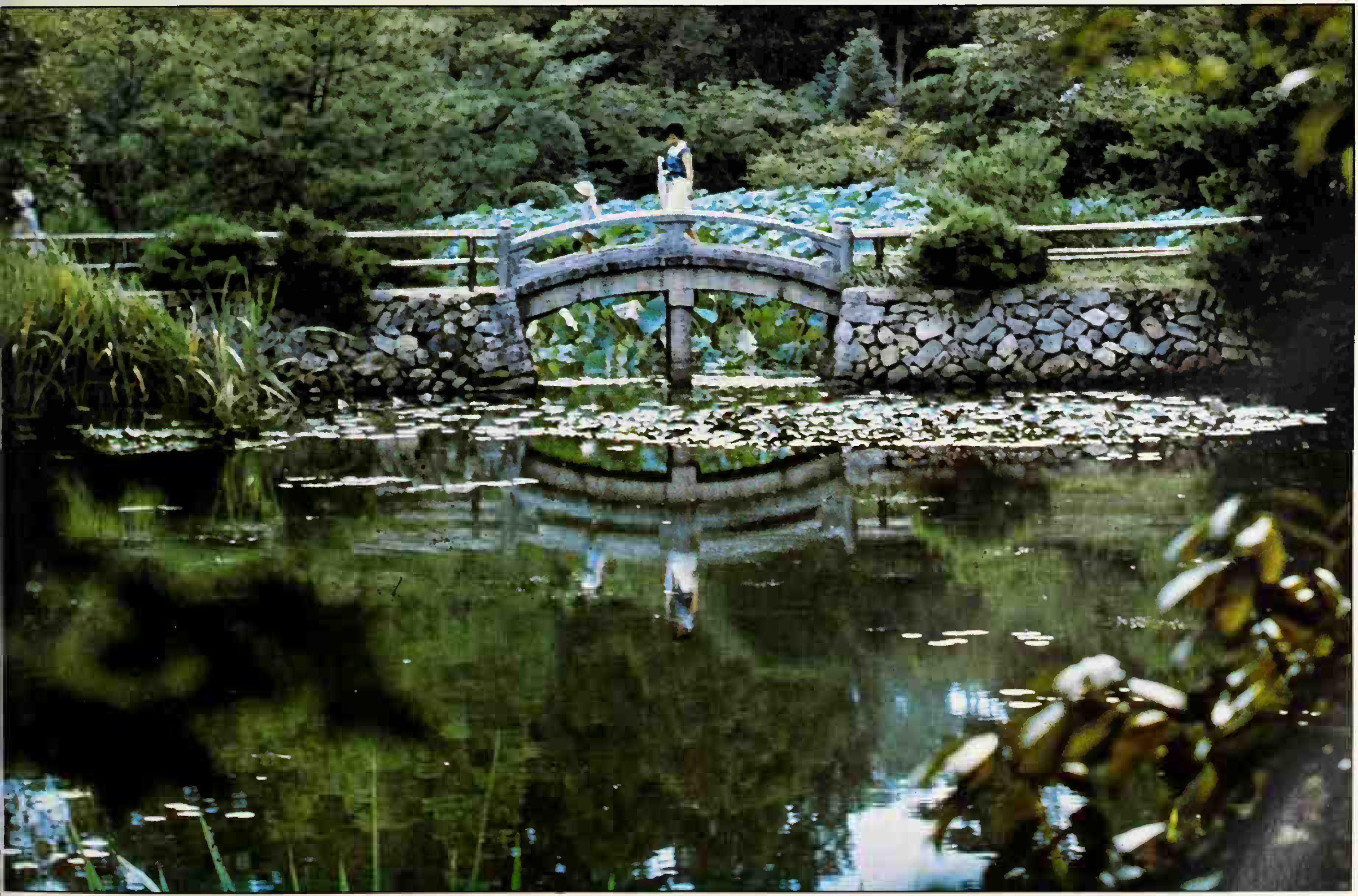
sidered a first principle of Buddhism. 'Vast Emptiness,' replied the sage. Taken aback, in fact a little nettled by this second statement, the emperor then demanded, 'Who are you who thus reply to me?': to which he received the jolting answer, 'I do not know'. Then, without further words, Bodhidharma took himself off (some legends and many paintings have him journeying upright on a reed, a leaf, or a straw across the wide Yangtze river – calmly fearless because one-with-all) to take up a nine year term of deep meditation (*zazen* in the Zen vocabulary), facing a cave wall.

One of Japan's most valued national treasures, a monumental painting by Sesshu, the famous 15th-century artist-monk, depicts Bodhidharma in this cave with the disciple Hui-Ko (in Japanese, Eko) who has cut off a hand to indicate his invincible will to work for enlightenment.

In his part of the dialogue with the conventionally pious emperor, Bodhidharma was not being merely cheeky or captious. By denying any 'merit', that is, reward or value, to formal temple worship or the copying and slavish study of approved scriptures, he was placing emphasis on the more profound and subtle, indeed the ultimate Buddhist, goal of self-knowledge, the one true road to final liberation from life's anxieties and enigmas.

His answer 'Vast Emptiness' to the question of the nature of Buddhism's first principle was a positive, not a negative, retort. His words did not imply mere emptiness in the usual sense of the term. In Zen the non-dualistic eternal Void, when truly comprehended, is seen as the rich source of all life and all wonders.

Bodhidharma's third reply, 'I do not know', to the Emperor's question concerning his personal identity is a conundrum on which Zen students have been testing their powers of comprehension for centuries. It suggests the impossibility of replying in words to the immense question 'Who are you?' Yet the question is considered answerable in non-verbal terms for, as the Buddha nature is inherent in every sentient being, there can be achieved, with the right effort, a lasting realization that one's own consciousness is the very Buddha Mind itself, or Absolute Reality.



Picturepoint London

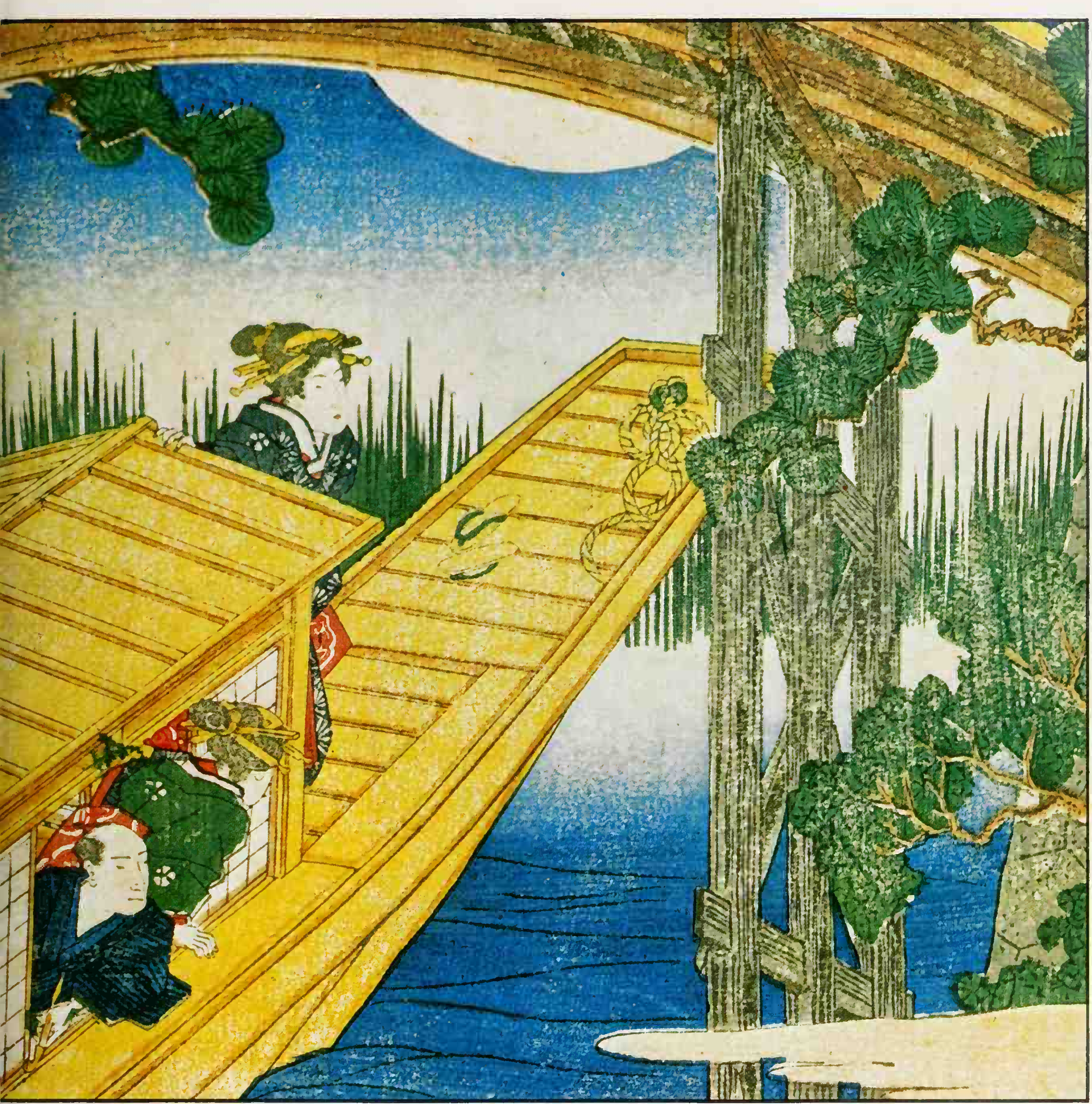
The Shortcomings of Reason

Zen's unswerving centuries-old emphasis on direct intuitive experience, rather than reliance on words about experience, has been described in modern psychological terms as a way of connecting with the deep unconscious to the end that one becomes what one truly is, as the tree grows, the bird flies, the cloud forms.

Zen holds that the so-called rational mind is incapable of solving an individual's deepest problem: his meaning to himself and life. In Zen reason is not allowed to assume the place of mastery that it has occupied for centuries in Western philosophy, the inheritor of the Greek viewpoint. Reason, in the Zen view, is incapable of bringing lasting spiritual or psychological equilibrium, for it is the very nature of the reasoning process to produce contradictory, yet equally valid, theories that lead on and on endlessly, arriving nowhere. Talking about water will not quench a thirst any more than speaking of food will satisfy hunger. Again and again Zen teachings stress that it is not possible to take hold of the true merely by abandoning the false, nor can one attain peace of mind or any final answer by argument or the use of logic. Final awareness and lasting freedom can come only when the deepest intuitional faculties of the human being are tapped and put to use.

In reaching these perceptions, and releasing these invisible energies, Zen employs its own singular techniques. In the Soto school, founded by a brilliant religious genius, the Japanese Zen master Dogen (1200-1253), one finds rather more emphasis on 'quiet sitting' than in the Rinzai school with its dynamic use of the koan. Since each school, however, employs specific periods of meditation (walking and running, as well as sitting) along with the mind-boggling koan, it seems safe to say that their similarities are more numerous than their differences.

The Rinzai School was founded somewhat earlier than the Soto by another brilliant spiritual genius, Eisai (1141-1215), generally accepted as the actual founder of Japanese Zen. It was Eisai who, after several visits to Chinese Zen centres, became convinced that this religious philosophy or



Michael Holford Library

Zen teachings stress that final awareness and lasting freedom come only when man's deepest intuitional faculties are tapped, a concept that is reflected in Japanese art; in this the world was perceived intuitively from within, and the artist attempted to represent not physical space but an internally apprehended space: print by Yashima Gatutei

way of life, then at its height, could be transplanted to Japan and bring about there a Buddhist awakening. Although Eisai was forced by circumstances to make concessions to types of Buddhism considered less pure, he belongs in the true Zen lineage and stands out among many names of missionary monks who brought the teaching across the sea from China to Japan. Eisai is also honoured as the father of Japanese tea culture, although tea itself had already been introduced from China some time before.

Since the Soto school teaches what is called 'sitting with a single mind', 'observing one's mind in tranquillity' or even'sitting just to sit', it has been designated as the 'Gradual School', in contrast to the Rinzai, which is popularly known as the 'Sudden School', due to its greater emphasis on the abrupt breakthrough into a new state of consciousness, of heightened awareness, by means of the dynamic thrust of the koan.

The word koan comes from the Chinese term *kung-an* and originally meant a precedent-establishing formulation in the legal sense. In its origin the koan was a spontaneous expression of the exuberant enlightenment which came to the spiritual heirs of Bodhidharma during the Tang era in China; part of a general desire to get rid of religious rules, to throw away form and ritual in order to be carried 'by the storm of the spirit', as Heinrich Dumoulin has expressed it. In due course this highly original and vigorous expression of a rejuvenated Buddhism faded away and it was then deemed expedient, by certain wise teachers, to maintain some records of this first flowering to serve as guidelines in less inspired or vital periods. Thus it came about, in spite of Zen's strong emphasis on 'that which goes beyond the word', that a surprising number of koan, mondo, chronicles, dialogues and sayings from the past are to be found in the

Enlightenment may be found in every moment of life, according to Zen belief, and it is possible to discover the deepest mystery and wonder in what appears to be the commonplaceness of existence: flower arranging, a highly regarded art in Japan, reflects the Zen philosophy of joy in simplicity, and unfaltering awareness

Picturepoint London

literature of the Zen branch of the many-branched Buddhist tree.

The irrational Lewis Carroll nonsensicality of the koan has, in recent years, caught the imagination of many Westerners who find in them what Alan Watts has described as 'an itchy fascination'. The koan is deliberately designed to throw the mind off its accustomed track, to detach it from familiar habits of classification and division, comparison of this with that.

There can be no mentally worked-out answer to 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' or 'What was your original face before you were born?' Answers, when they come, come in the form of illuminating perceptions and they are found not by thinking about the koan, but rather by trying to gaze at it quietly. The student is advised to become concentrated, but not in thought.

To achieve this kind of perception requires total absorption day and night in the koan itself. Even when attending to the duties of everyday life it should remain firmly fixed in the unconscious mind. Zen does not believe it necessary to occupy Bodhidharma's cave in order to practise zazen; there is needed only an unshaken determination to find the Buddha's answer. Yet, paradoxically, the seeker should never strive for the goal itself. He should just sit, breathe properly (very important in Soto) or concentrate single-pointedly on the koan until he perceives 'What Is'. Then he has at last grasped the truth that one's self and the everyday world in all its manifold manifestations, forever active in flux and transformation, are together only an eternally changing and transforming, appearing and disappearing, expression of 'This', of 'Is-ness' or 'Such-ness'. Once this state has been reached the Zennist does not give up all action, but rather his actions rise spontaneously out of the flow of Being itself. Understanding and use of 'This-ness' or 'Is-ness' is well described in Eugen Herrigel's small classic, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, which tells how, after long and arduous effort, the author at last learns to let 'it' shoot for him, so that the arrow reaches its target as effortlessly, as naturally, as a fruit which is ripe falls from a tree.

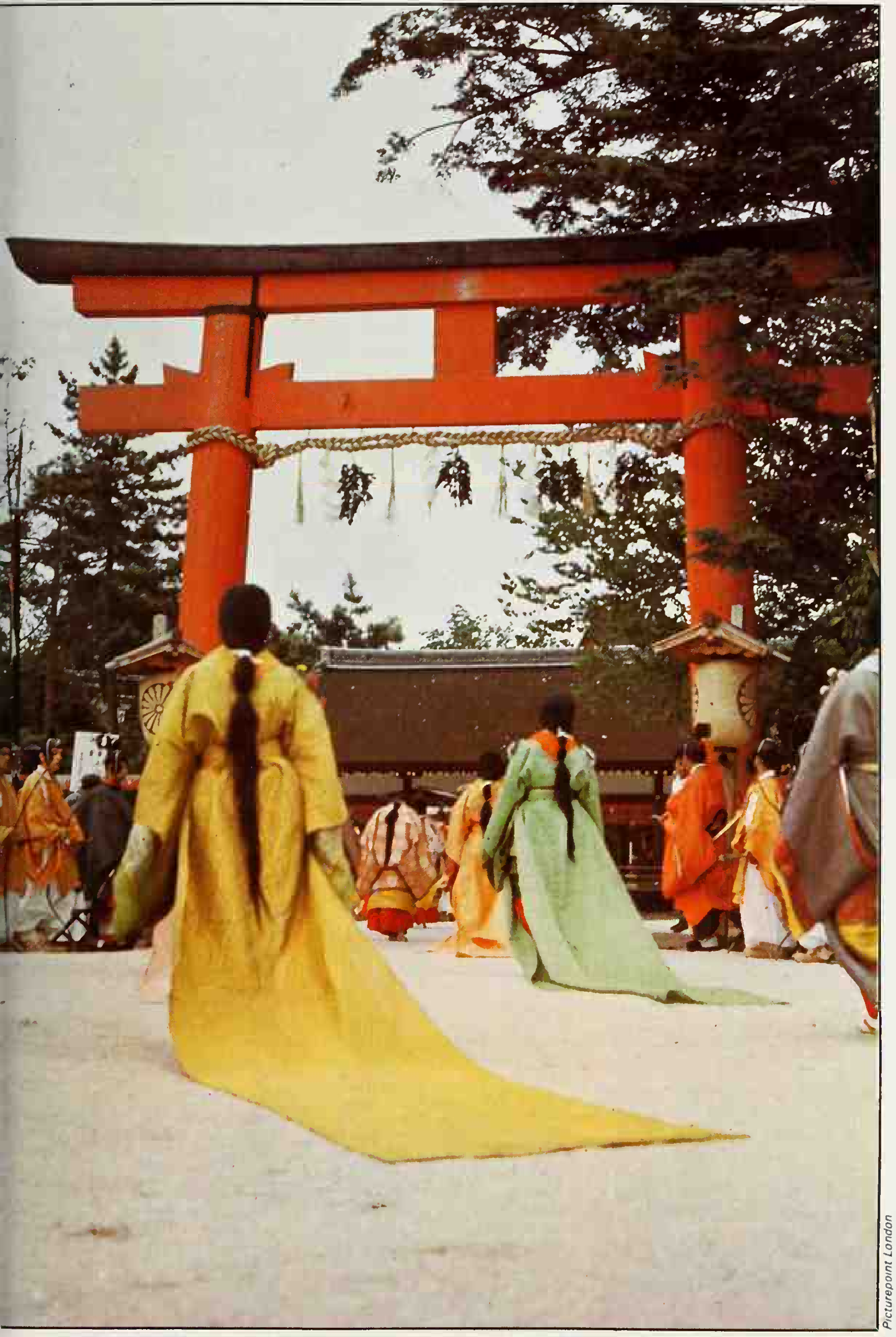
Two favourite characters in Zen art are the so-called 'idiots', Han-shan (Kanzan) and Shih-te (Jittoku), invariably depicted in rustic garb, often leaning on garden brooms, watching leaves fall or birds quarrel, or just standing, laughing. They are not only expressing their simple joy in life's 'Is-ness' but also sharing their amusement at the folly of man's usual way of living. The haiku that might well accompany these carefree lunatics is one which reads:

Sitting quietly, doing nothing
Spring comes and the grass grows by itself.

Any interpretation of these lines, however, as an argument for non-participation, idleness or lack of concern could hardly be farther off the mark. In Zen no labour is beneath one's dignity; in fact all work is considered a basic and necessary part of existence. An ancient Zen monastery rule states baldly, 'No work, no food!'

Humour: Antidote to Smugness

One of Zen's outstanding characteristics is a zany sense of humour which has found expression not only in its literature but in a coexisting art of sharp and subtle commentary. The famous roshi Hakuin (1685-1768), known in his time as 'the greatest sage in 500 years', was not only a master teacher but also a great artist in the spontaneous free style favoured by Zen painters and calligraphers. Among his astringent masterpieces there is a cartoon-like drawing of a one-eyed monster in company with a simple blind man. The grotesque creature, depicted with a single fierce headlight eye in the centre of his forehead, is glaring at the



Described as 'a unique blend of Indian mysticism and Chinese naturalism sieved through the special mesh of the Japanese character', Zen claims to be the direct inheritor of the principles of thought and behaviour promulgated by the historic Buddha in the 6th century BC: worshippers entering the Kamigam

Picturepoint London

unconcerned blind man as he exclaims, 'Hey! I am a one-eyed monster. Aren't you afraid of me?' 'I have no eyes,' replies the blind man, 'Why should I be afraid of you? You should be scared of me'.

A comical sketch, by another painter-monk, shows a neophyte warming his backside at a burning statue of a Bodhisattva. The accompanying anecdote tells that, when caught in this irreverent act, the culprit innocently replied that, since there had appeared in the ashes no sign of *sarira* (a special substance found only in the remains of cremated saints), he concluded it was only a wooden statue – and it was a very cold day.

This kind of rough humour and seeming irreverence has in no way prevented Zen temples and monasteries from remaining repositories of great religious art, nor has it stopped Buddhists from prostrating themselves before Buddha images as an act which 'horizontalizes the ego-mast', as one interpreter has put it. Zen's countless humorous anecdotes spring from the wish to avoid self-conscious religiosity or pompous smugness about spiritual attainment.

Satori, in Zen annals, is often accompanied by a kind of transcendental laughter, as in the story of the monk who came to his roshi for help with one of the classic questions assigned to neophytes: 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India?' The master, to whom the question was put, suggested that before proceeding with the problem the inquiring monk should make him a low salaam. As he was dutifully prostrating himself the teacher administered a good swift kick. At this unexpected impact the disciple's murky irresolution was instantly resolved. Afterwards he told everyone he met, 'Since I received that kick from Ma Tsu, I haven't been able to stop laughing.'

A number of modern students of Zen feel that the koan exercise has been overstressed in Western literature about Zen, and that too much has been made of practices followed in certain training centres: the swift thwack on the drowsy or irresolute student's shoulders by an attendant with a special stick (invariably accompanied, however, by low bows on the part of both the dealer of the blow and its recipient), or the loud rude shouts of disapproval and dismissal from an impatient roshi to whom a student has brought an obviously thought-out answer.

There are also critics who are disturbed by the West's over-emphasis on the idea of the suddenness of the breakthrough into satori which tends to give the impression of 'instant Zen', when in truth illumination, though it may be sudden in its impact, is experienced only after prolonged effort and a number of satori-like experiences (*kensho*) prior to the Great Enlightenment in all its stunning finality.

Something of the nature of Zen may be discovered from the words of an old poem:

> When one looks at it, one cannot see it;
> When one listens for it, one cannot hear it;
> However, when one uses it, it is inexhaustible.

Zen claims to point a paradoxical Way, at once abstract and personal, that is markedly different from the practices of more conventional religions.

NANCY WILSON ROSS

FURTHER READING: Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (Pantheon Books, 1963); Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and Richard de Martino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (Harper and Row, 1960); Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (Random, 1971); Nancy Wilson Ross ed, *The World of Zen* (Random House, 1960) and *Three Ways of Asian Wisdom: Hinduism, Buddhism and Zen* (Simon and Schuster, 1966); Philip Kapleau, *Zen East & West* (Doubleday, 1980).

Olympian Zeus, lord of storms and rain, supreme in his mountain stronghold, had an earthly prototype in the Mycenean Great King, but Cretan and other influences also contributed to his nature

ZEUS

THERE IS GOOD REASON to suppose that the hierarchical organization of the Olympian deities of the Homeric poems reflects the social and political conditions of the Mycenean period, when the gods and goddesses were gathered together in a single heavenly stronghold under the monarchical hegemony of Zeus (see GREECE). Their dwellings, built by Hephaestus, surrounded the central palace of Zeus.

The authority of the supreme male deity was now fairly stable, but it was still by no means unchallenged. The Mycenean pantheon spread its influence as the Mycenean social and economic system became dominant elsewhere. The ensuing conflict and fusion is paralleled by an increasing complexity in cult and mythology and reflected in the composition and organization of the pantheon.

In its most dramatic form this process had assumed the character of a struggle between the older conception of an Aegean goddess and a newer conception of a dominant male god, Zeus, whose name is certainly Indo-European. Crete had been the centre of Minoan civilization and had now become part of the fringe of the Mycenean. The study of the all-pervasive cult of Zeus in Greek religion helps us to understand the means whereby, and in what diverse forms, the Minoan religion, with its prime allegiance to a Great Goddess (although it was already familiar with the growing power of its own Cretan male god), became progressively reconciled with the Mycenean pantheon (see CRETE).

Significantly, it has been claimed that the earliest representation of Zeus occurs on the Geometric lid from a tomb at Fortetsa near Cnossus. That this representation is traditionally Cretan is indicated by the presence of birds, one of them carried on the left hand of the figure traditionally supposed to be Zeus, who strides towards a tripod. There is another bird on top of the tripod. Between the figure and the tripod is yet another, larger, bird with its head lifted towards the handle of the tripod.

The principal figure carries in his right hand an object which consists of three wavy verticals – the thunderbolt, or at least fire, perhaps resembling the bolts depicted on Syro-Hittite reliefs. Underneath the tripod is a human bust – perhaps the Minoan goddess herself, associated with, but not yet displaced by, Zeus. We could then have here represented a double epiphany or manifestation of Cretan Zeus and the older Cretan goddess, heralded by the birds of Minoan tradition.

The thunderbolt of Zeus was itself traditionally regarded as a means of bringing death so that immortality might be conferred. The tripod, a three-legged cauldron to be put over a fire, goes back in its origins to the 14th century BC.

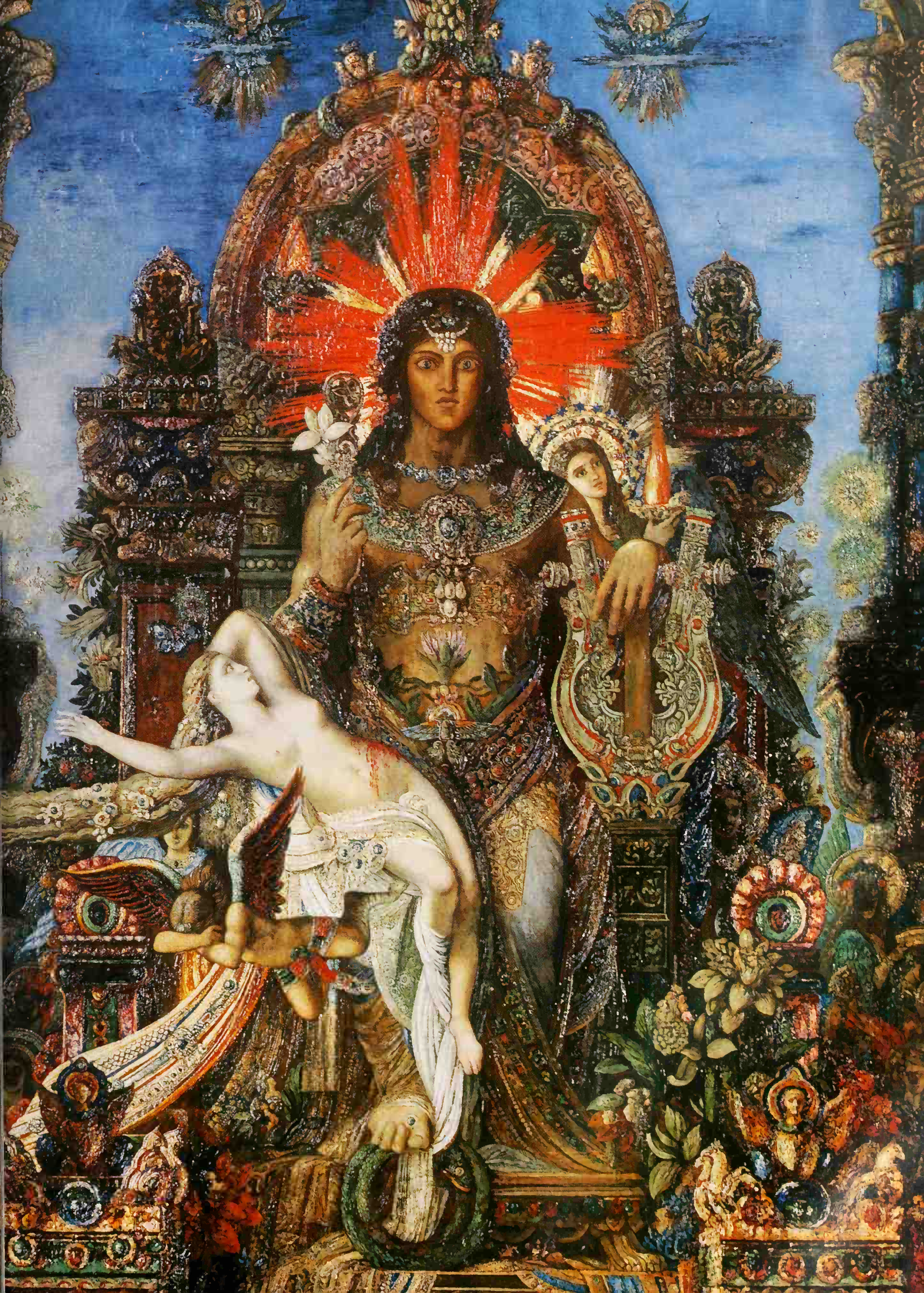
The Cauldron of Rebirth

Real or simulated boiling in a cauldron is a familiar prelude to rejuvenation, immortality and apotheosis. The infant Dionysus-Zagreus, for instance, was slain, his limbs cooked in a cauldron, and restored to life again. In the boiling cauldron mortality and old age are shed, perennial youth is gained, rebirth follows upon death, the initiate is born again. Thunderbolt and tripod can be accompaniments of initiation; and Cretan Zeus, pre-Olympian in origin, was an initiation god.

It is tempting to imagine that the mystery of Cretan Zeus himself is celebrated in this scene on the Fortetsa lid in the form of a double epiphany, reflecting the combination of the new Dorian with the traditional

God of the sky and of storms, Zeus is traditionally depicted carrying a thunderbolt, which was itself regarded as a means of bringing death so that immortality might be conferred *Below left* Bronze statue of Zeus, c 5th century BC *Below* Bronze cast for a statue of Jupiter, the Roman god who was identified with the Greek Zeus, 2nd century AD
***Right* Both Zeus and Jupiter, his Roman counterpart, were renowned in mythology for their many love affairs; Semele, the mother of Dionysus, was loved by Zeus but consumed by the fire of his thunderbolt when the god appeared to her in his divine form: *Jupiter and Semele*, painting by Gustave Moreau**

C. M. Dixon



Cretan background, as it were newly Hellenic yet abidingly Minoan.

Background of the Gods

However that may be, other evidence illustrates the growth of the cult of Mycenean Zeus against the old Minoan background in Crete itself. Homer and Hesiod were the first to compose theogonies, to give the gods their epithets, allot them their offices and occupations and describe their forms, in the tradition reported by Herodotus. This means that these customary Greek theogonies derived from the epic tradition, rooted in the Mycenean period.

In the Homeric Catalogue of Ships (in the *Iliad*, book 2) Crete is described as having 100 towns. Seven of these are mentioned by name, including Cnossus, Gortyna and Phaistus, all of them from central Crete, which was apparently the chief area of Achaean occupation.

Though they are by no means principal characters in the *Iliad*, it is quite clear that the Cretan captains were of some importance, consistent with the island's contribution to the Trojan expedition, for Idomeneus and Meriones had a considerable contingent of 80 ships. This number can be compared with 100 ships under the command of Agamemnon himself, 90 under Nestor, 60 under Menelaus, brother of Agamemnon, and a mere 12 under Odysseus.

Idomeneus boasts of his descent from Zeus. Like other similar leaders of the Heroic Age of Greece, he had quite a short pedigree, which goes up to a god in the third generation before the Trojan War. Aerope, his first cousin, was connected by marriage with the Atreidai, the family of his allies. She married Atreus and was herself a grand-daughter of Minos. In the *Iliad*, Idomeneus kills Phaistus, son of the Maionian Boras from Tarne and the eponymous hero of this great Cretan city. There was another Phaistus in the Peloponnese, and again another in Thessalian Achaia. The opponents of Idomeneus, Oinomaos and Alkathöos have associations with Pelops and the Peloponnese; and his father Deucalion has associations with Thessaly. The implication is that he was an intrusive northerner by extraction, a bringer of strife to Crete before he went to Troy.

Europa and the Bull

Zeus, the god ancestor of Idomeneus, the one member of the Olympian pantheon with an Indo-European name, rose to his eminence with the growing power of the Achaeans. The result was that, in Crete, the name of their sky god was attached to a Minoan deity, whose original ritual and character can be discerned from the evidence of later times. It was not until after the Minoan period that this originally secondary deity, this youthful god, pushed his way to the forefront in a variety of forms and under a variety of names.

The myth of the Minotaur (see BULL; MAZE; THESEUS) implies that he was identified at Cnossus with the bull; and the story of the love of Queen Pasiphae for the Minotaur may derive from a form of the sacred marriage, the male partner in the ritual being played by the king masked in the head of a bull. The sacred marriage was closely involved with the fertility of the crops. This association is clearly to be observed – as is also the association with central Crete – in the famous legend of Zeus and Europa.

An archaic kind of Europa, riding on a bull, features in the earliest (5th century BC) coins of the city of Gortyna and also of Phaistus. The type persists on the coins of Gortyna throughout the 5th century. Their pictorial character has plausibly suggested a derivation from local frescoes. This relation is even more conspicuous in the 4th-century coins both of Gortyna and of Phaistus. On one type of coin from Phaistus Europa is sitting on a rock and is welcoming with her raised hand the bull who is approaching her. A coin series from contemporary Gortyna tells vividly the story of the marriage of Zeus and Europa, with Zeus changing from a bull into an eagle. Coins of Cnossus, probably struck in 220 BC, when that city was closely allied with Gortyna, are similar to the Gortynian type which features Europa; and Europa on the bull remained as one of the chief coin types of the Roman province of Crete – probably struck at Gortyna between 66 and 31 BC.

It appears to be likely that the final evolution of the male deity from a bull into an anthropomorphic Zeus, the Zeus who later became involved with Europa, must have occurred in the Mycenean period. Zeus is featured as the partner of Europa not only in Hesiod, but already in the *Iliad*. Animal sacrifices continued to be conspicuous in the rituals of Zeus, the victims normally being either rams or, more frequently, oxen. Both of these animals are associated with sky gods in general and with Zeus in particular. They were the most precious victims that pastoral peoples could offer, considered to be most possessed of fertilizing power and most essential to their economic survival. Various traditions combine to associate mainland settlers at Gortyna, or its neighbourhood, with the Arcadian area where the Achaean dialect survived. It is therefore perhaps significant that Gortynian Zeus shared the title of *Hekatombaios* ('to whom hecatombs are offered') with the Arcadian Zeus.

A celestial Zeus of Gortyna called Zeus Asterios ('Starry Zeus') was known to Byzantine writers and he was associated with Europa by earlier writers including Hesiod and Bacchylides. After his affair with Europa, Zeus reputedly gave her in marriage to the Cretan king Asterion (or Asterios, or Asteros) who, childless himself, reared the children of Zeus and Europa; and, according to the Byzantine writer Tzetzes, Sarpedon, Minos and Rhadamanthys were sons of Zeus Asterios. The Minotaur was also called Asterios or Asterion. There were sacred herds of cattle at Gortyna, a cult of a solar deity called Atymnos, brother of Europa, whose early death was mourned; and an inscription of the 5th century BC confirms the worship of the sun.

The art and the literary and numismatic evidence of historical times all indicate how the sacred marriage of Zeus and Europa combined Mycenean with Minoan – and even more primitive – traditions of cult. Europa often features in art on the bull, holding in one hand his fertilizing horn and in the other hand a flower, symbol of her fertility and also of earlier magical associations before the bull had been deified.

The marriage of Zeus and Europa traditionally occurred in or under a plane tree near a stream at Gortyna. Coins of Gortyna of the 5th century BC show a goddess in a tree, generally considered to be Europa possessed by Zeus in the form of an eagle and thus identified with Hera (see HERA). A bull's head, however, is apparently often fixed to the trunk of the tree. The tree on the coins seems to be a pollard willow and not a plane tree. Yet we need not go so far as to accept the suggestion that Europa was actually a willow goddess and that Zeus, as a nursling of the willow, might naturally be mated with a willow bride. Magical plant and tree associations of this kind must have existed long before either Zeus or Europa. Such earlier connections were indicated in the mention of the tree where the sacred marriage took place and the stream nearby, where the goddess bathed.

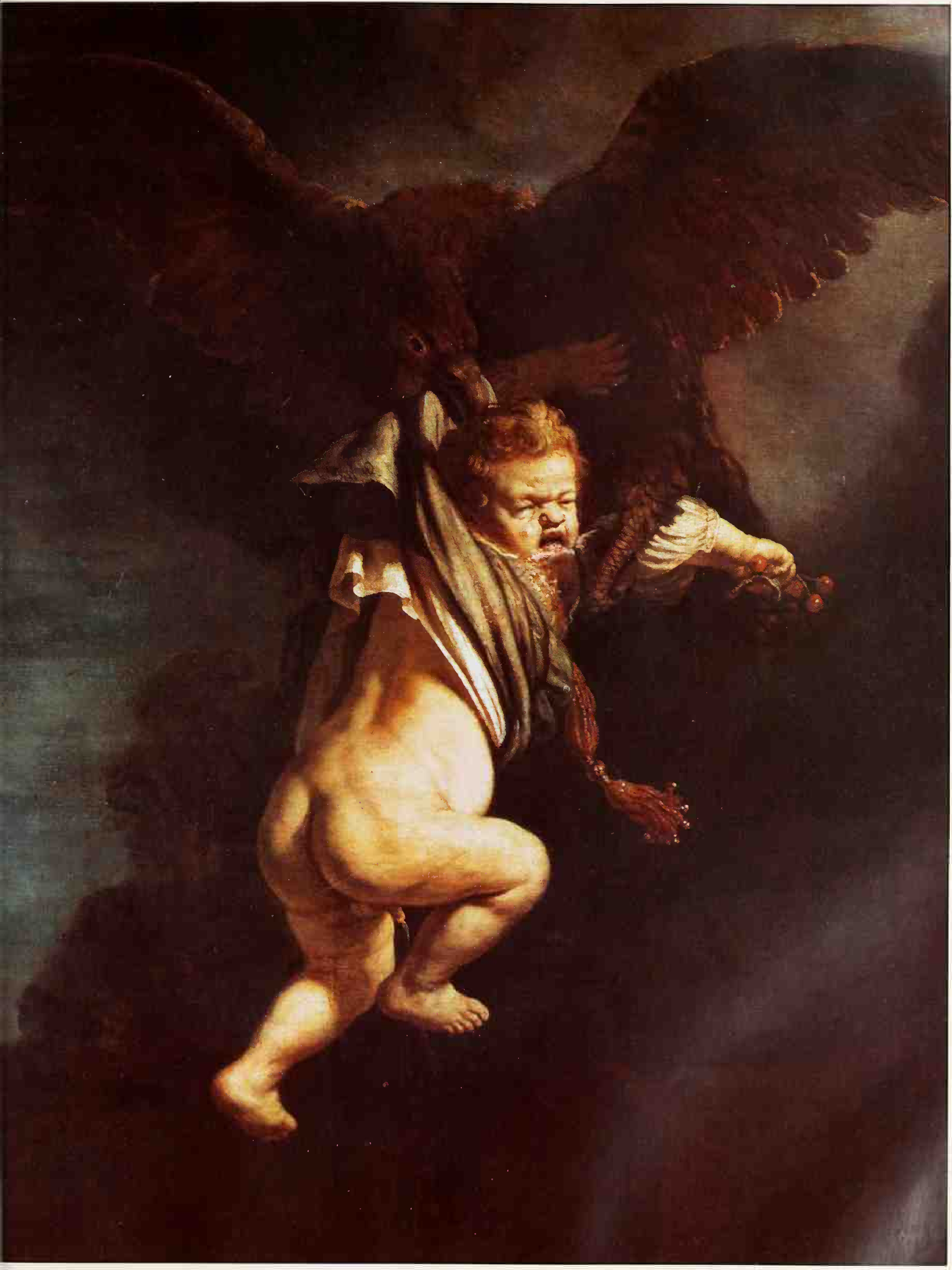
Putting Away Childish Things

The cult of the goddess Leto at Phaistus, not far away from Gortyna in southern Crete, is of particular interest. We have evidence to prove that Cretan youths, when they reached the last stage of initiation into manhood and citizenship, cast aside their boys' garments before assuming their warriors' costumes. The formality of this particular ritual was embedded in the festival which was known at Phaistus as the *Ekdysia* ('casting off'), during which the youth cast off his boys' clothes. This festival was associated with the local cult of Leto and was connected with the myth of Leucippus, who was changed from a girl into a boy. According to the myth, Galatea, daughter of Eurytus and wife of Lamprus, bore a daughter; and she persuaded Leto to let the girl change sex when she grew up.

The change was commemorated in the Phaistian festival of the Ekdysia. When the Phaistians married they lay down beside the statue of Leucippus, which was presumably in the sanctuary of Leto. The festival and the mythology suggest a combination of fertility, initiation and marriage ritual. The youths of Phaistus were apparently initiated into manhood, citizenship and marriage at the same period of life. The local Leto, as her epithet *Phytia* ('causing growth') indicates, promoted growth and fertility in the young. When growth had been promoted, the boy died and was reborn as a man, casting away his boy's clothes and dressing like a man.

Leto *Phytia* and her Phaistian festival were rooted in the earliest stratum of Cretan religion. It has been suggested that, because the cock was dear to Leto (as to all women in childbirth), since he stood by to lighten her labour, Leto *Phytia* was somehow related to Zeus *Welkhanos* of Phaistus, whose sacred bird was the cock.

Zeus as an eagle, abducting Ganymede: a painting by Rembrandt



Giraudon

Coins of Phaistus in the period from about 430 to 300 BC show Welkhanos as a youthful, beardless god, his right hand caressing a cock; on the reverse side there is a bull. The Cretan identification of Zeus with Welkhanos is also confirmed by lexicography.

The discovery of numerous tiles with the name of the god *Weukhanos* (Welkhanos) was made years ago at neighbouring Hagia Triada. Significantly, the temple of Zeus Welkhanos was here built upon the ruins of the old palace of Hagia Triada. An associated month name and spring festival is attested in three other towns of Crete.

A. B. Cook (author of *Zeus*) thought the meaning of Welkhanos could have been 'god of the willow-tree', confirming his idea that Zeus at Phaistus, as at Gortyna, was consort of a willow goddess. For he had a cock (instead of his usual eagle), since the cock, as the crest of the Phaistian Idomeneus, had a long-standing mythical association with the town. There was also a tradition that Idomeneus was descended from the sun, sire of Pasiphae, and that the cock was sacred to the sun. Though these associations may be true, there is no reason but to suppose that Cook's identification strained the evidence.

It is nevertheless possible to conclude, from the nature and provenance of the cult, that Zeus Welkhanos was a product of the Minoan god of fertility. There is clear similarity between the coins of Phaistus showing Welkhanos with a cock in the branches of a tree and the coins of Gortyna showing Zeus, Europa and the eagle. The cock, like the eagle, seems to signify a bird epiphany. Welkhanos must surely have been yet another male partner in a sacred marriage with the old Minoan mother goddess.

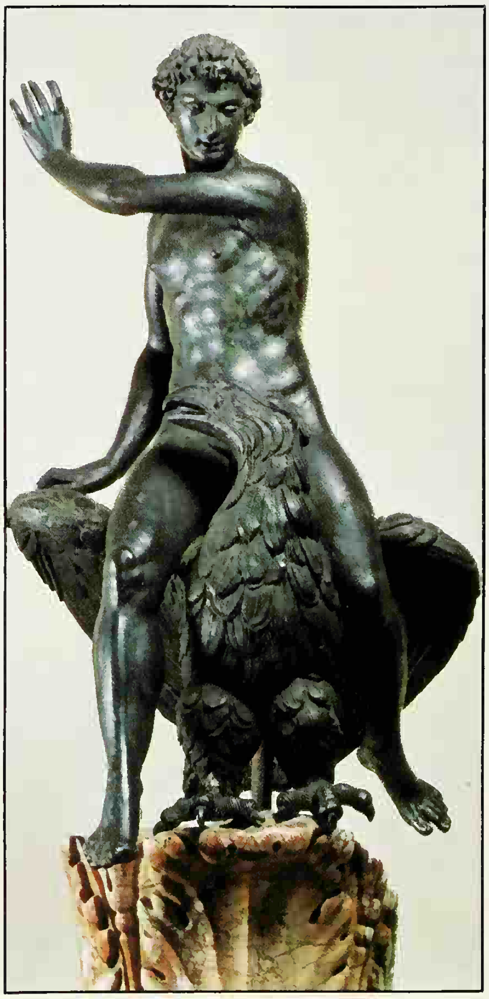
Thunderbolt and Aegis

The evidence about Zeus Welkhanos and the representation (if it be of Zeus) on the lid from Fortetsa serve alike to emphasize the difficulty of clearly distinguishing Olympian Zeus from the specifically Cretan Zeus. The weather god, lord of storms, rain, lightning and thunder, who acquired supremacy in his mountain stronghold, had an earthly prototype in the Mycenean Great King. Nevertheless, the Cretan Zeus who survived with such dominant traits of his original nature long after the Olympian pantheon became supreme in officially sponsored religion, is but one symbol – though one of outstanding importance – through which old prehistoric cult exercised its influence. The later Zeus, Olympian though he might be, exhibited himself in many forms, as is evident in those various distinguishing epithets attached to his name, which not only reveal his many-sided nature but often a pre-Olympian basis.

In eastern Crete, 'the Cretan-born Zeus' was specifically associated with Dicte by the epithet *Diktaios* (Dictean). The geographer Strabo expressly connected the temple of Dictean Zeus with the old Bronze Age population of the area. Although the Hellenic temple which stood on the site of the Minoan town of Palaicastro had been destroyed, sufficient numbers of votive offerings were found there in the course of archeological investigation to define its position; and the site of the alter was fixed by a bed of ashes. It was the discovery of the inscription of the famous Hymn of the Curetes (see CORYBANTES), addressed to Zeus of Dicte, which confirmed with certainty that the temple was that of Dictean Zeus. Or again, there is Zeus *Idaios* ('of Ida'), similar to Dictean Zeus, mentioned in a much-discussed fragment of *The Cretans* of Euripides, delivered by a chorus of inspired devotees of Zeus.

The ancient Greeks themselves believed that the Pelasgians were the aboriginal inhabitants of Greece and they tended also to associate Pelasgians with Carians (people from south-west Asia Minor) and the Leleges of the Greek islands. The name survived in the ancient shrine of Zeus *Pelasgios* at Dodona in Epirus, in north-west Greece. Here was the most ancient oracle in Greece, the divine responses obtained from the rustling of sacred trees and from brazen vessels suspended from them (see ORACLES). The cult of Zeus *Karios* ('Carian Zeus'), centred at Mylasa, the Carian capital, was also found in Boeotia and Attica, in mainland Greece.

As well as the bull and the cock, the eagle was also associated with Zeus in mythology, and the god is said to have assumed the form of this bird when he carried off the young Ganymede to heaven to make him his cup-bearer: statue of Ganymede astride the eagle, by Benvenuto Cellini



Scala

'The portion of Zeus is the broad heaven among the clouds in the upper air,' says Homer in the *Iliad*. Hence a repeatedly recurrent Homeric epithet of Zeus is the Cloud-gatherer, sending rain, lightning, thunder. Small wonder that altars have been found in Greek houses dedicated to Zeus *Kataibates* – Zeus who descends (in thunder and lightning) – and sacrifices were made on these altars to appease him and ward off destruction from the house.

Beside the thunderbolt, the aegis (skin shield) is a peculiar attribute of Zeus. In keeping with his rise to eminence in the Heroic Age of Mycenean Greece, Zeus, as god of manly strength and prowess, was especially honoured at two of the four great athletic festivals of Greece, the Olympian and the Nemean, besides many others. From the 4th century BC onwards, Greek historians reckoned time in Olympiads, the periods corresponding to the Olympic Games, which were quadrennial and claimed uninterrupted celebration from 776 BC (see GAMES).

The sacred precinct of Zeus at Olympia, the Altis, was surrounded by a wall with several entrances. In the southern part stood the great temple of Zeus, with the famous gold and ivory statue of Zeus by Pheidias, which was classed as one of the seven wonders of the world until it perished in 462 AD, and which was more praised in antiquity than any other work of art.

Lord of the City State

Zeus was of supreme importance in the daily life of the Greek city state. As Nilsson explained, in *A History of Greek Religion*: 'Just as the father of the household is Zeus's priest, so Zeus himself in the patriarchal monarchy of earlier times is the special protector of the king and hence the supreme custodian of the social order. Thus in Homer Agamemnon is under the special protection of Zeus. The god was not dethroned with the fall of the monarchy. As Zeus *Polieus* he is the divine overlord of the city state.'

As protector and guardian of the house he was Zeus *Herkeios* ('Of the front court'). As Zeus *Ktesios* ('the Acquirer') he was similarly protector of house and property. Hence Nilsson's conclusion that where Zeus appears in the shape of a snake under such names as *Ktesios*, *Meilikhios* ('the Kindly One') and *Philios* ('the Friendly One'), the name of Zeus had been added to the house deity which appeared as a snake, because Zeus was also protector and guardian of the house. A deity, male in later Greece, female in the Minoan Age, developed out of a domestic snake cult.

Zeus was also protector of the fugitive suppliant, as Zeus *Hikesios*. He had a part to play in the sanctity attaching to the duties of friendly hospitality (*Ksenios*). From the beginning of the 5th century BC, there grew up, in the city of Athens and its neighbourhood, a special class of resident aliens called *metoikoi*. They were attracted by the opportunities of trade in a flourishing commercial centre, and the government encouraged them, despite the fact that, as foreigners, they were really excluded from civic rights and from public ceremonies associated with the official religion of the state. Nevertheless, once a year, at the national festival of the Panathenaea, these resident aliens were not merely permitted to take part but were allowed special marks of honour. They also had a separate Zeus *Metoikios* as their special patron.

As the governments of the city states, like that of Athens, tended to become more democratic in form, they still continued to have allegiance in council and assembly to Zeus as, for example, to Zeus *Agoraios* ('Of the market place'). That epithet was not peculiar to Zeus, but no doubt derived from the location in the market place of a shrine or altar of the deity to whom it applied. Functional shades of meaning must have been derived from the various functions of the *agora*, the market place, chiefly as a place of assembly and also as a market place in the strict sense. Zeus Agoraios would therefore have been a special patron of those mustered in assembly at the agora. From this special association with the assembly of citizens, Zeus Agoraios could be described in literature as patron of eloquence or of public supplication.

In later antiquity, among the more sophisticated, as religious belief tended to become more monotheistic, there was a tendency for Zeus to become conceptualized as the one, single god, the beginning and the end of all things.

(See also HIGH GODS; SKY.)

R. F. WILLETTS

FURTHER READING: A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Biblo & Tannen reprint, 3 vols); M. P. Nilsson, *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion* (Lund, Sweden, 1950); M. P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion* (Greenwood, 1980); W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (Beacon Press, 1968); R. F. Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals* (Greenwood, 1980).

Zeus rose to pre-eminence with the growing power of the Achaean Greeks, but traces of the Cretan Zeus survived in Greek mythology: according to legend, the god was born in Crete and hidden in a cave from his father Cronus, who would otherwise have devoured him: the cave of Zeus, Crete

Ronald Sheridan

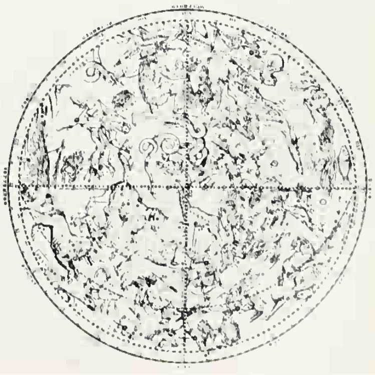
Zion

Or Sion, one of the hills of the city of Jerusalem, often used in the Old Testament as an alternative name or the city itself as the spiritual entre and capital of the world; n Christian literature frequently used to mean the heavenly city of God, or the Church; Zionism is the modern movement to create a Jewsh national home in Palestine, which culminated in the establishment of the state of Israel.
See JERUSALEM.

Mansell Collection

Zodiac

In astrology, a circle in the sky through which the sun, moon and planets appear to move; divided into 12 'signs', each allotted 30 degrees; a planet's position in the zodiac is believed to affect the way in which it influences people and events on earth; the signs of the traditional 'tropical' zodiac are not identical with the actual constellations in the sky, the 'sidereal' zodiac.
See AQUARIUS; ASTROLOGY; and articles on each of the signs.



Mansell Collection

The risk of being turned into a zombie, a soulless, automaton-like body or a disembodied soul, by poison or enchantment, is still feared and guarded against in Haiti

ZOMBIES

ONE CANNOT live long in Haiti without hearing talk of zombies, dead bodies brought back to a half-life by magic, and many stories about them have appeared in print. In 1939, for instance, Zora Hurston published a now classic account of a young girl from a well-to-do family who was discovered four years after her death working as a slavey in a shop; she was rescued by French nuns and placed in a nunnery.

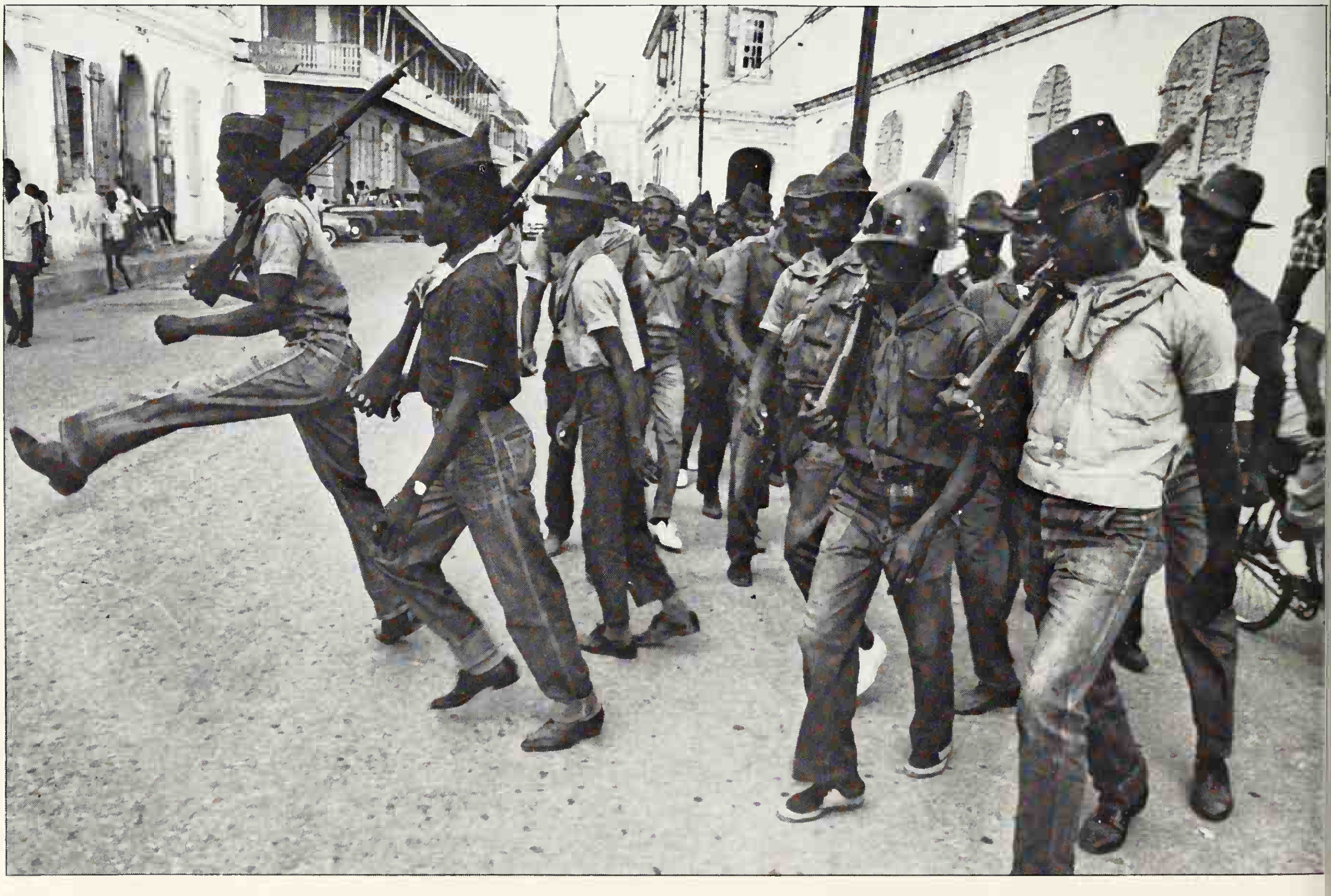
The tale was still current in Haiti 20 years later, with several additions: four or five quite different towns were named as the place where she had been found, and some said that her rescuers had been Baptists. They also declared that she had been recognized on account of her bent neck, the result of her having been buried in a coffin too small for her, and by a scar on her foot made by a candle which had overturned and burnt her during the wake. But these distinguishing marks are first known in a story told to the writer Alfred Métraux in about 1950. It concerned a young woman who over-brusquely turned down the amorous advances of a *houngan*, or Voodoo priest (see VOODOO), who bewitched her in revenge, dug her up after her presumed death and used her as a zombie until the Catholic anti-superstition campaign caused him to set her loose.

Whatever the original truth of these stories, their combination has produced something approaching a myth which will probably be gaining credence 100 years from now, because of its apparently factual detail and its compact sense of the superstitions involved. It is certain anyhow that few stories told about zombies are to be taken literally.

Many of the people thought to be zombies are in fact morons or idiots, of which Haiti has its fair share. Métraux tells of one such who escaped from the house where her parents had locked her up, and whose behaviour alarmed the neighbouring peasants sufficiently to make them believe she was a zombie. Zora Hurston took a photograph of a woman zombie in a hospital who almost certainly was a mental defective. The mistake is easy enough to make, for both zombies and morons have certain things in common. The zombie, for instance, walks with a shambling gait and downcast eyes, speaks gibberish in a nasal voice if it speaks at all, does not answer when spoken to, and is bereft of the usual marks of sanity.

Equally important, Haitians delight in telling tall stories about things supernatural, which serve to amaze their audience and even to convince themselves, if only for a moment. A magistrate, for instance, told a convincing story about a Catholic priest who went blind after seeing a troupe of zombies in the hills, remarking that one shouldn't laugh at such matters. But he immediately followed up his cautionary tale with an eye-witness account of a corpse being dug out of its grave and then re-animated, which was a mere hoax: he examined the grave the following day and found a pipe leading from it to the air so that the supposed corpse – the houngan's accomplice – could breathe before his exhumation.

Few people have actually seen zombies. The following incident was said to have occurred in 1959, and was vouched for by a Catholic priest. (It must be remembered, however, that Voodoo and its superstitions are the great enemy of the Church in Haiti, and that even the most upright of men will slander his enemy in a good cause.) A zombie had come wandering into the village where he lived, entered the courtyard of a house and promptly had his hands tied together by the owner, who took him to the police station. The police wished to have nothing to do with such an ominous creature, and so he was left outside the station for some hours, chewing at his bonds, until he was given salt water to drink – the instant cure for zombification. He then found his voice again and told his name. His aunt, who was living in the



Tales of zombies, dead bodies magically brought back to half-life, proliferate in Haiti where the superstitions of Voodoo are an integral part of life; President Duvalier's private army was named after the *tontons macoute*, or magicians of Haiti, and some were believed to be zombies

village, was sent for: she not only recognized him but declared she had seen him dead and buried four years previously.

The Catholic priest also arrived on the scene and learnt from the man that he had been one of a large number of zombies set to work by the houngan who had enchanted them. This announcement frightened the police even more, and they sent word to the houngan that he could have his zombie back for a consideration. Two days later, however, the man died, and it was generally presumed that the houngan had murdered him for having spilt the beans. He was arrested, but his wife fled into the hills with the remaining zombies.

The educated classes also tell of zombies, as in Métraux's account of a *monsieur* whose car broke down outside the house of a houngan. The houngan, assuring him that the matter was no mere accident, invited him inside and showed him a zombie, in whom the monsieur recognized a great friend, dead some six months previously. Full of pity the monsieur offered the zombie a drink, but was stopped by the houngan who warned him of terrible dangers if he did so.

Return to the Grave

Perhaps the most sensational zombie tale is the one recounted by W. B. Seabrook, about a number of zombies owned by a houngan called Joseph and looked after by his wife. One day, not realizing what she was doing, she gave them salted biscuits to eat. Awoken from their deathly trance and knowing themselves for the walking corpses they were, they made straight for the cemetery, brushing aside all who would stop them. There they hurled themselves upon their graves and tried to dig themselves back into the earth, but turned into carrion as they did so.

The most feared consequence of releasing a zombie from his bondage is that he will revenge himself physically and magically upon his owner. Those who own zombies thus make a point of treating them with great harshness – another point which they have in common with the mentally deranged, for it is normal practice in Haiti to beat lunatics and keep them frightened. The parallel is in fact recognized obliquely by all who claim knowledge of how to make a man into a zombie: there are two major ways, by poison and by enchantment. The plants usually cited as poison are manchineel, whose apple-like fruit was often used by resentful slaves in plantation days to kill their owners and their livestock, and datura, the thorn apple, which contains atropine, and belladonna or deadly nightshade. A further poison can be made from the legendary three drops which escape from the nose of a corpse hung upside down.

Besides these, houngans also prepare a number of leaf powders of different kinds with various magical and, it is said, pharmacological properties. One of these powders, containing pepper wood, is very effective in bringing on possessions by the gods. The powder seems to have no effect other than to stimulate the mucous membranes of the nose, but this is enough to trigger off a dissociation when people are highly suggestible, as they are during a ceremony. It is quite possible, therefore, that such a powder used in the right context can magically zombify a man, by entrapping his soul and leaving him with nothing but his body (called the corpse body in Haitian parlance) and his spirit, also termed the zombie.

Spider into Zombie

Initiates into Voodoo pass through a similar state but with proper safeguards. To become possessed by a god their souls must first be displaced or, as we should say, they must be dissociated. During their initiation, their souls are incubated and finally transferred into a sacred vessel called the *pot de tête*, or head-pot, where they are safe from the attacks of evil-doers and under the protection of the gods. At their death, a rite called *dessounin* is practised which sends their spirits into the waters of death and again captures their souls in a head-pot to await their spiritual resurrection. An initiate is thus a purified zombie whose activity when possessed is controlled by a god, not a magician.

Significantly enough, the dessounin rite is copied by those who want a dying man's zombie. This is done by placing a pot, containing 21 seeds of *pois congo* and a length of string knotted 21 times, under the pillow of the moribund. After his death the string turns into a spider, and the pot containing it is placed in a dark room. To turn the spider into the dead man's zombie all you need do is to knock three times at the door, taking care to stand with your back to it, and to threaten it with a whip when you give it its orders.

Banquet with Corpses

In the centre of the room was an elegantly set table with damask cloth, flowers, glittering silver. Four men, also in evening clothes, but badly fitting, were already seated at this table. There were two vacant chairs at its head and foot. The seated men did not arise when the girl in her bride-clothes entered on her husband's arm. They sat slumped down in their chairs and did not even turn their heads to greet her . . .

As she sat down mechanically in the chair to which Toussel led her, seating himself facing her, with the four guests ranged between them, two on either side, he said, in an unnatural strained way, the stress increasing as he spoke:

"I beg of you . . . to forgive my guests their . . . seeming rudeness. It has been a long time . . . since . . . they have . . . tasted wine . . . sat like this at table . . . with so fair a hostess . . . But, ah, presently . . . they will drink with you, yes . . . lift . . . their arms, as I lift mine . . . clink glasses with you . . . more . . . they will arise and . . . dance with you . . . more . . . they will . . ."

Near her, the black fingers of one silent guest were clutched rigidly around the fragile stem of a wine-glass, tilted, spilling. The horror pent up in her overflowed. She seized a candle, thrust it close to the slumped, bowed face, and saw the man was dead. She was sitting at a banquet table with four propped-up corpses.

W. B. Seabrook *The Magic Island*

In southern Haiti this kind of zombie is known as a *vivi*: it is the equivalent of a jinn trapped in a bottle. Another way of making a vivi is to exchange a man's soul while he is still alive for that of a lizard, chicken, butterfly or other small animal. The man is no wiser for the substitution, but the animal which embodies his soul cannot die, and merely vanishes if an attempt is made to kill it. The word 'soul' is probably a misnomer here: a better word is 'talent', for it is men talented in law, accountancy, business or some such skill who are sought for as zombies, and for whom the dessounin rite is practised even if they are not initiates into Voodoo proper.

In any case, it is difficult to tell a vivi from a *baka*, that monster of the supernatural created by black magic to bring luck, power or wealth. Both have to be served in the proper manner or their owner is destroyed by their ungoverned force; both are best invoked in cemeteries. One kind of zombie can be made of a man long dead (by whipping his grave with sticks of pois congo) and is used in several branches of magic: for instance a tired prostitute can have her private parts inhabited by such a 'mort' or dead man, paradoxically to liven them up and make her clients come back for more.

It is to stop this kind of zombification that people enter into Voodoo, have their souls placed in head-pots and undergo the dessounin rite. But even this is not enough to stop the corpse answering the magician's voice as it lies in its grave, and being turned into a zombie. In certain parts of Haiti, therefore, the corpse is buried face down with its mouth full of earth, or its lips are sewn together; sometimes a knife is placed in its hand with which it can defend itself. In other places sesame seed is scattered in the grave so that the ghost will be eternally occupied in counting how many there are. As a last resort the corpse is strangled or shot through the head.

Zombies thus come in two major forms: as a body without a soul, and as a soul without a body. These last are not easily distinguishable from magical spells, and both from confidence tricks. The word zombie itself, however, comes from the Arawak Indian term *zemi*, a god or a spirit, which also lies at the origin of the name Baron Samedi, god of the dead: by which we may infer that a zombie is properly to be understood in religious terms, as a body resurrected by spiritual means. It is not impossible for such means to be used for profane ends, nor that a man can truly exist as a body without a soul. So far, however, this is still a moot point.

FRANCIS HUXLEY

FURTHER READING: Zora Hurston, *Tell My Horse* (Lippincott, 1938); Francis Huxley *The Invisibles* (Humanities, 1966); Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (Schocken, 1972); W. B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (Folcroft, 1977).

From a monotheistic faith with Ahura Mazdah as its supreme deity, Zoroastrianism progressed towards a dualistic concept of Ohrmazd, principle of goodness and light, and Ahriman, principle of evil and darkness; in all its phases, however, Zoroastrianism remained primarily a religion of free will

ZOROASTRIANISM

ZOROASTRIANISM is the name given to the religion founded by the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, probably in the 6th-7th centuries BC. Modern scholarship tends to accept the traditional date of the prophet, '258 years before Alexander'. For the Iranians, 'before Alexander' could only mean the final extinction of the First Persian Empire at the sack of Persepolis by Alexander the Great in 330 BC. Hence Zoroaster's 'date' would be 588 BC. But what period in his life would this refer to? It might refer to his birth, to his first revelation at the age of 30, to his conversion of the local king Vishtaspa at the age of 40, or to his death at the age of 77.

Whichever date we accept, Zoroaster's life will have spanned the 7th and 6th centuries BC. This, however, like so much in Zoroastrian studies, cannot be regarded as at all certain. So too with the place in which he operated. The later tradition placed him in western Iran, in what is today Azerbaijan; but this is almost certainly not true, for the internal evidence – the dialect and the place names mentioned in the early Zoroastrian texts – points to the east, the country near the Oxus River, now in Soviet Central Asia. Modern scholarship would have it that Zoroaster's field of activity was in ancient Chorasmia, corresponding roughly to what is today the Turkmen Republic of the Soviet Union. This again is highly probable but far from certain.

Gods and Demons

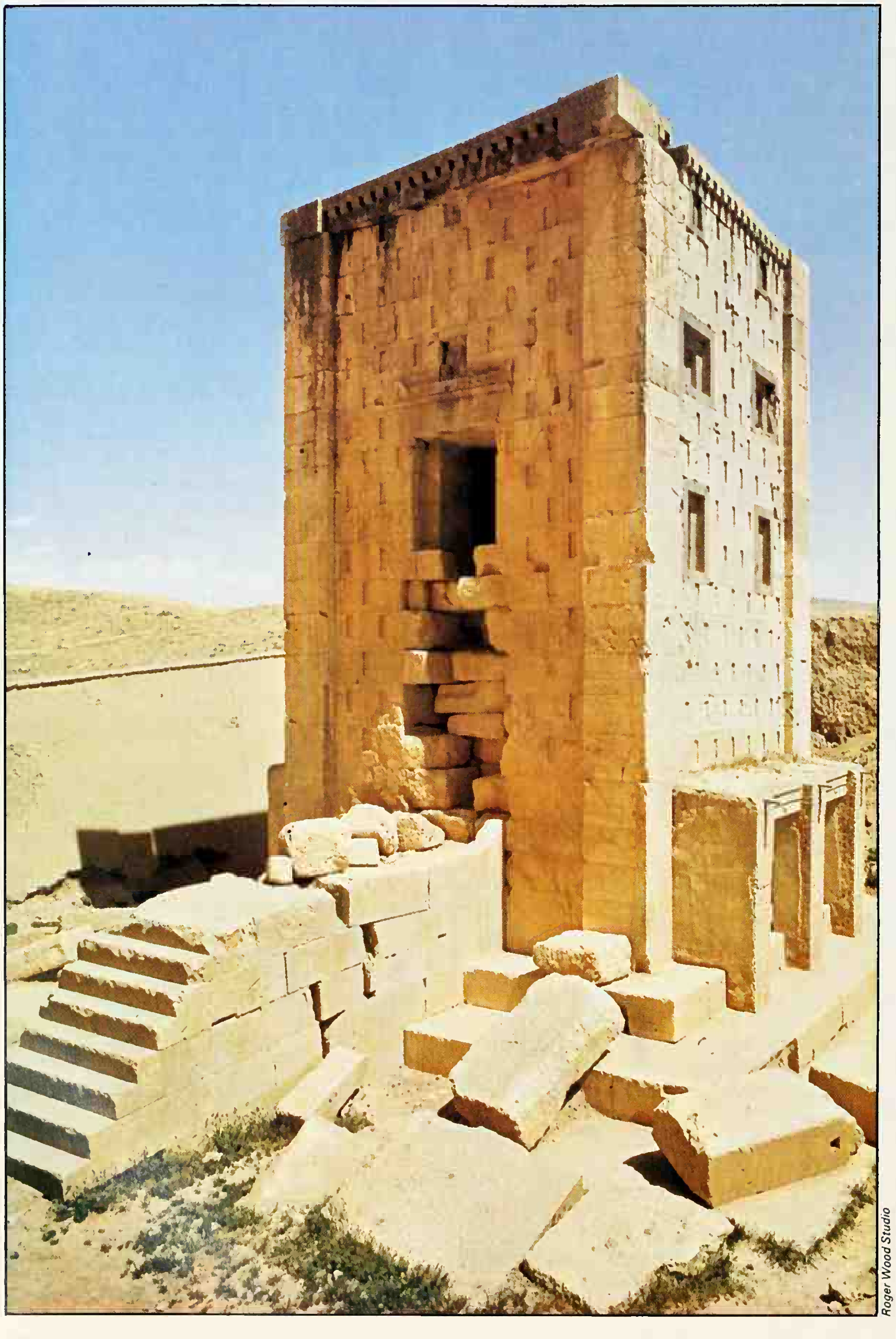
It must be emphasized at the outset that in practically every aspect of Zoroastrian studies uncertainty prevails, and this for a variety of reasons. The principal reason is that our main sources do not agree. The sacred text, the *Avesta*, itself only a fraction of the original scripture and handed down orally for at least 1000 years, is (as is the way of sacred scriptures) not consistent with itself, nor is it consistent with the contemporary sources – the inscriptions of the Achaemenian kings and the various Greek accounts of the Iranian religion from Herodotus onwards.

The same is true of the second period of Zoroastrian supremacy during the Second Persian Empire, the so-called Sassanian Empire, which lasted from 226-651 AD. It cannot be claimed, then, that all that will be said in this brief article is authoritative; for Zoroastrian scholars have disagreed with a vehemence of acerbity rare even among academics.

Zoroaster, or Zarathushtra, as he is called in the *Avesta*, was born some time in the 7th century BC, fled from his native land because he preached a doctrine which his fellow-countrymen refused to accept, and found asylum with a certain King Vishtaspa in eastern Iran, who finally accepted his teaching. That his teaching was at variance with the traditional religion is clear. Just what that earlier religion was is less clear. One thing is certain, however: that the Aryans, the common ancestors of the 'Aryan' invaders of India (who were responsible for the earliest sacred book of the Hindus, the *Veda*), and the Iranians who inhabited the Iranian plateau had a common religion which was polytheistic (see INDIA).

Two Groups of Deities

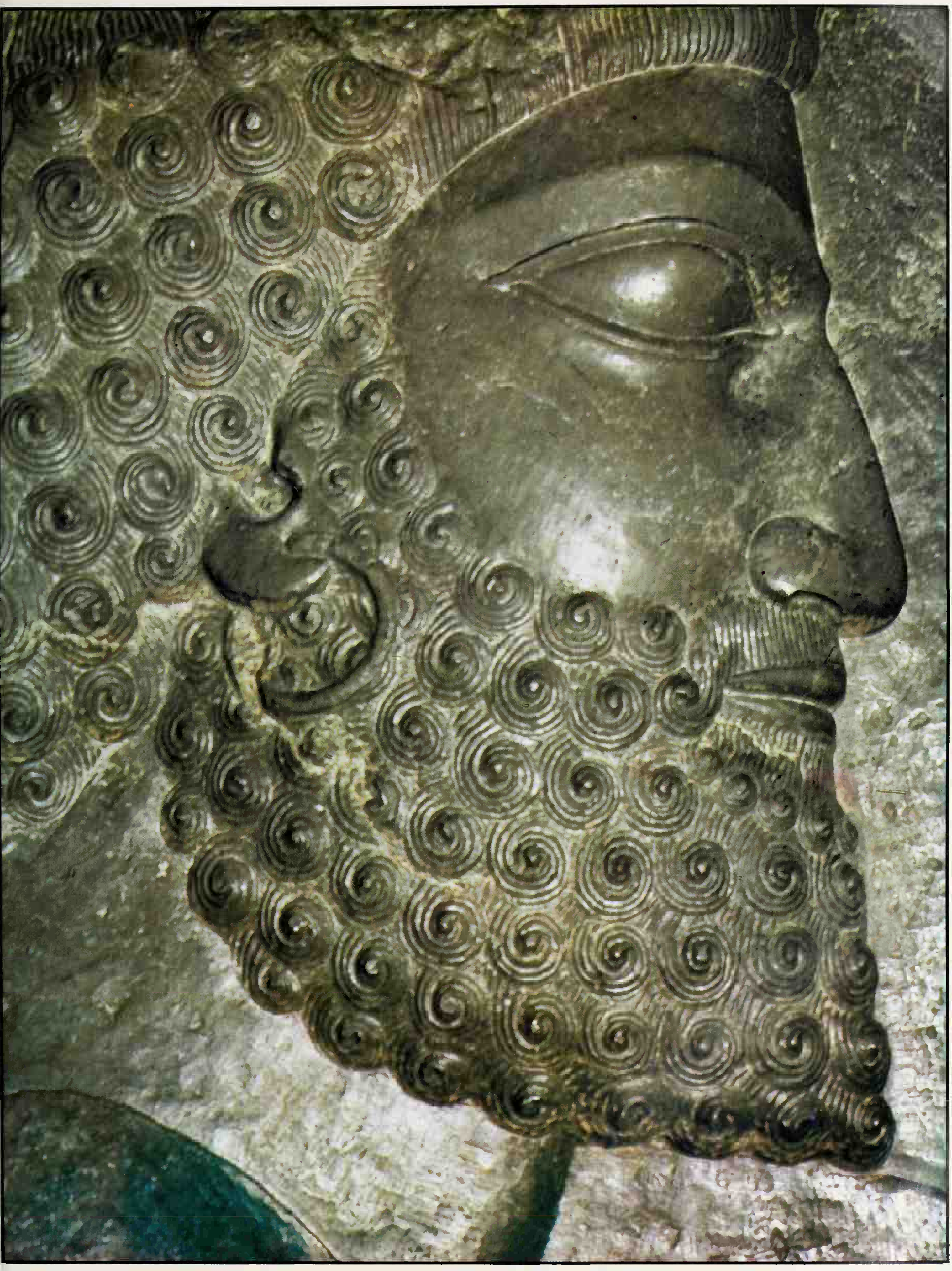
The original Aryan pantheon was, it seems, divided into two distinct groups of deities, the *asuras* (or *ahuras*) on the one hand and the *daivas* on the other. The asuras seem to have been remote gods who dwelt in the sky, while the daivas were nearer to men and more intimately



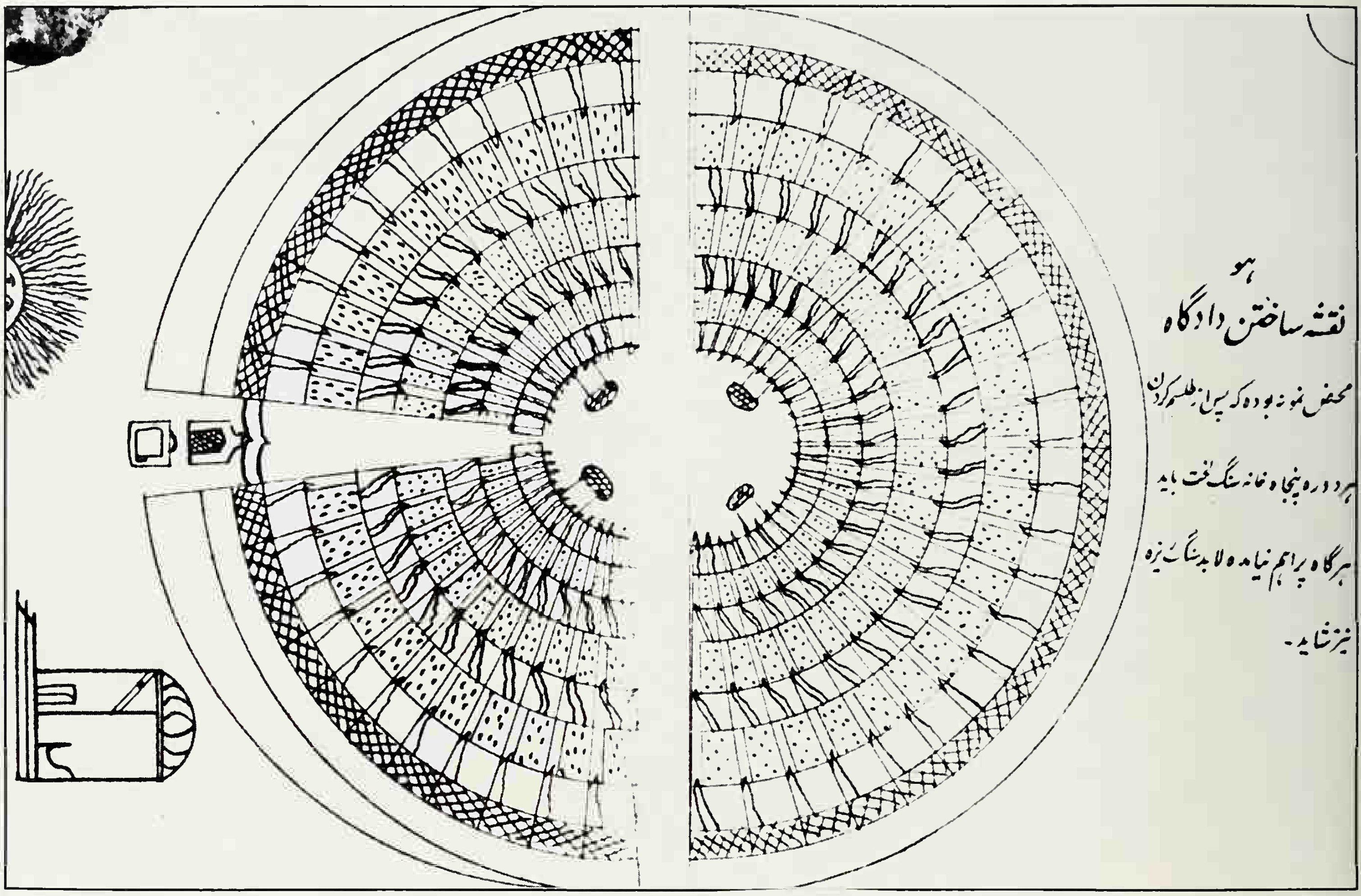
Roger Wood Studio

Right **Head of a Persian king, in the Teheran Museum: like other religions, Zoroastrianism developed and changed, and in its strictly dualist form as the official state religion of the Sassanian kings from the 3rd century BC to the 7th century AD, its doctrine of the great opposing principles in the universe influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam**

Left **Ruins of a fire temple at Naqsh-i-Rustam, near Persepolis: fire was called the 'son' of Ahura Mazdah, and the rite of sacrificing the plant *haoma* centred round the sacred fire**



William MacQuitty


هو
نقشه ساختن دادگاه
محض نمونه بوده که برای طلسم کردن
هر دوره پنجاه خانه سنگ تخت باید
هرگاه فراهم نیامده لابد سنگ ریزه
نیز شاید.

Right **The Parsees, the Indian Zoroastrians, believing that neither earth nor fire should be defiled by corpses, place their dead in the 'towers of silence', where they are exposed to the sun and the vultures** *Above* **Plan of a tower of silence: one side of the building is for men's bodies, the other for women's**

associated with them. From the beginning there seems to have been tension between the two groups. In India the asuras, because they were held to possess magic powers which they were likely to use against mankind, finished up by becoming demons. But in Iran precisely the opposite happened.

The ahuras (the Iranian form of the Indian asuras) were able to retain their divine status, whereas the daivas were reduced to the status of demons. This probably happened before the appearance of Zoroaster, as the terms *ahuro-tkaesha* ('the religion of the ahuras') and *daevodata* ('the law of the daivas') would seem to show. Already, it would appear, the ahuras were considered to be beneficent powers, and the daivas were maleficent.

New Message from God

Zoroastrianism has been described both as an ethical monotheism and as a classical form of dualism (see DUALISM; EVIL). How can one religion be described in two such contradictory ways? The answer is that Zoroastrianism, like any other religion, developed and changed, now emphasizing one aspect of the prophet's message, now another. In any case, the Zoroastrianism of the prophet himself was very different from the form of Zoroastrianism which became prevalent in the later stages of the First (Achaemenian) Persian Empire (550-330 BC), and this again differed considerably from the official Zoroastrianism of the Second (Sassanian) Empire (226-651 AD). The first could be designated monotheism, the second modified monotheism, and the third dualism.

Zoroaster was born into a priestly family, but he saw himself as a prophet, the bringer of a new message from a god called Ahura Mazdah, the 'Wise Lord', who revealed himself as the true God. This message is preserved in the oldest part of the *Avesta*, the *Gathas* or 'Songs' of Zoroaster himself.

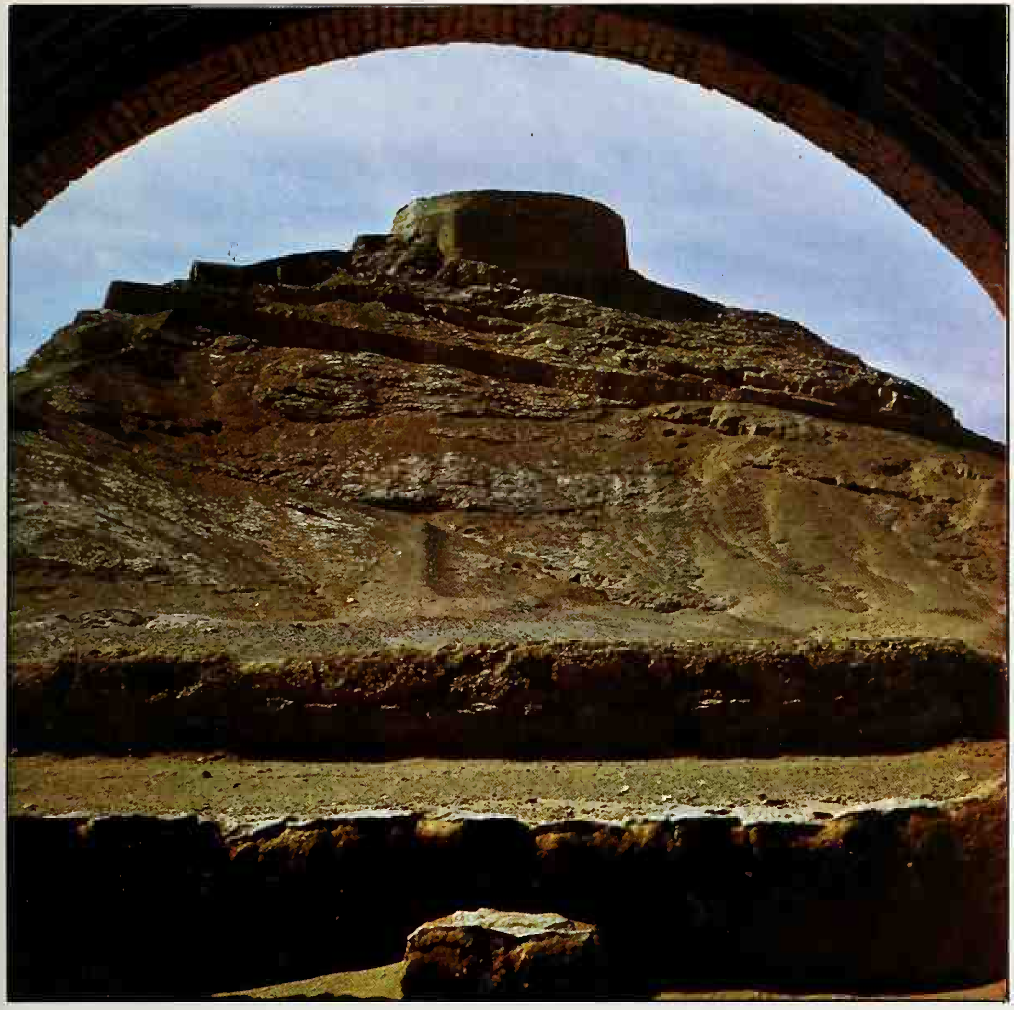
Zoroaster was a prophet every bit as much as were the Hebrew prophets – who prophesied at much the same time. He was convinced that he was inspired by God and that he was charged with a message from him to man. He claimed to 'see' him and also to hear his voice. Indeed, his relationship is so close that he can speak of it as one of 'friend to friend'.

The essence of Zoroaster's message is that God is One, holy and righteous, the Creator of all things, both material and spiritual, through his Holy Spirit, the living and the giver of life. He is good because he is productive and gives increase. His 'oneness', however, is a unity in diversity, for he manifests himself under many various aspects: the Holy Spirit, as and through whom God creates; the Good Mind, as and through which he inspires the prophet and sanctifies mankind; Truth, Righteousness, or Cosmic Order (*Asha*), as and through which he shows mankind how to conform to the cosmos in accordance with true righteousness; Sovereignty, as and through which he rules over the entirety of creation; Wholeness, which is the plenitude of his being; and Immortality, as and through which he will annihilate death.

The Bounteous Immortals

These aspects of the Wise Lord were later to be called the 'Bounteous Immortals', and in the later periods of Zoroastrianism they were to be associated with various material elements: they appear as God's creatures and are thus assimilated to the archangels of other traditions. Two of them demand particular notice: Truth and the Holy Spirit. Like the other Bounteous Immortals, they have acknowledged opposites or 'adversaries' which thwart and restrict them. Ahura Mazdah, as Supreme Deity, has no opposite but, insofar as he is associated with Truth and the Holy Spirit, he is (indirectly) at variance with the 'Lie' and the 'Destructive Spirit' – the later Ahriman – just as the Hebrew God is opposed to Satan in the later Judaeo-Christian scriptures.

Hence it is not wholly illogical to describe the Zoroastrianism of the prophet himself as both a 'monotheism' and a 'dualism'; and in so far as Ahura Mazdah reveals himself under different aspects, it


Roger Wood Studio

is not wholly absurd to describe it as a modified 'polytheism'.

Truth and the Lie

In the *Gathas* the basic dualism is between Truth and the Lie – Asha and Druj – which can also mean the established cosmic order and whatever disrupts it. This dualism remains throughout all the phases of Zoroastrianism. The Lie also means the disruption of the established political order (Darius described the rebels against his authority as 'liars'), and the disruption of the truthfully spoken word, or what we normally understand by a lie. As God, Ahura Mazdah is beyond both Truth and the Lie, but as and through Truth he is inexorably opposed to its opposite, which is also the spirit of disruption.

Similarly in the case of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is irreconcilably opposed to the Destructive Spirit (see AHRIMAN) and this opposition was later to be regarded as characteristic of Zoroastrian dualism. Of these two Spirits it is written:

> In the beginning those two Spirits who are the well-endowed(?) twins were known as the one good and the other evil in thought, word and deed... And when these Spirits met they established in the beginning life and death that in the end the followers of the Lie should meet with the worst existence, but the followers of Truth with the Best Mind. Of these two Spirits he who was of the Lie chose to do the worst things; but the most Holy Spirit, clothed in rugged heaven, (chose) Truth as did (all) who sought with zeal to do the pleasure of the Wise Lord by (doing) good works.

Although the two Spirits choose to do good and evil, the Holy Spirit can nevertheless say to 'him who is Evil: "Neither our thoughts, nor our teachings, nor our wills, nor our choices, nor our words, nor our deeds, nor our consciences, nor yet our souls agree".'

Ahura Mazdah, the Wise Lord, is himself described as being the 'father' of the Holy Spirit (as he is of several other Bounteous Immortals), but he is also in a sense identical with him. As and through the Holy Spirit, then, he is as irreconcilably opposed to the Evil or Destructive Spirit, the author of death, as he is to the Lie, for he is both Life and Truth. But if he is the father of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the Destructive Spirit's twin, does it not follow that he is the father of the Destructive Spirit too? In the later literature, the Wise Lord is roundly identified with the Holy Spirit, and once this has happened Zoroastrianism becomes a classically dualist religion (see OHRMAZD).

A minority, however, remembering that the two Spirits had been spoken of as twins, insisted that they must have had a common father. This could no longer be Ahura Mazdah (the later Ohrmazd), so some other entity had to be found. They finally settled on 'Infinite Time' (see ZURVAN), who thus became the supreme principle beyond good and evil.

The Two Houses

In all its phases Zoroastrianism is the religion of free will. Man is judged in accordance with the nature of the thoughts, words and deeds he has thought, spoken and done in his lifetime. The reward of the good is heaven, the 'Best Existence'; that of the wicked is hell, an 'evil existence'. At death the soul must cross the 'Bridge of the Requiter' which, in the later literature, is broad and free from danger for the righteous but becomes as narrow as a razor's edge for the wicked, who thereby fall helplessly into hell (see BRIDGES; JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD). In the *Gathas* it is Zoroaster himself who guides the righteous across the awesome bridge, but when the wicked reach it 'their souls and consciences trouble them when they come to the Bridge of the Requiter, guests for all eternity in the House of the Lie'.

Heaven and hell are states rather than places – the best existence and the worst existence or, more graphically, the House of the Good Mind and the House of the Worst Mind, the House of Song and the

William MacQuitty

On New Year's Day, in celebration of the beginning of spring, a great festival was held at Persepolis under the auspices of Ahura Mazdah, supreme deity of Zoroastrianism, during which representatives of all the nations of the Persian Empire brought tributes to the king: relief at Persepolis showing a procession of Median nobles

William MacQuitty/Teheran Museum

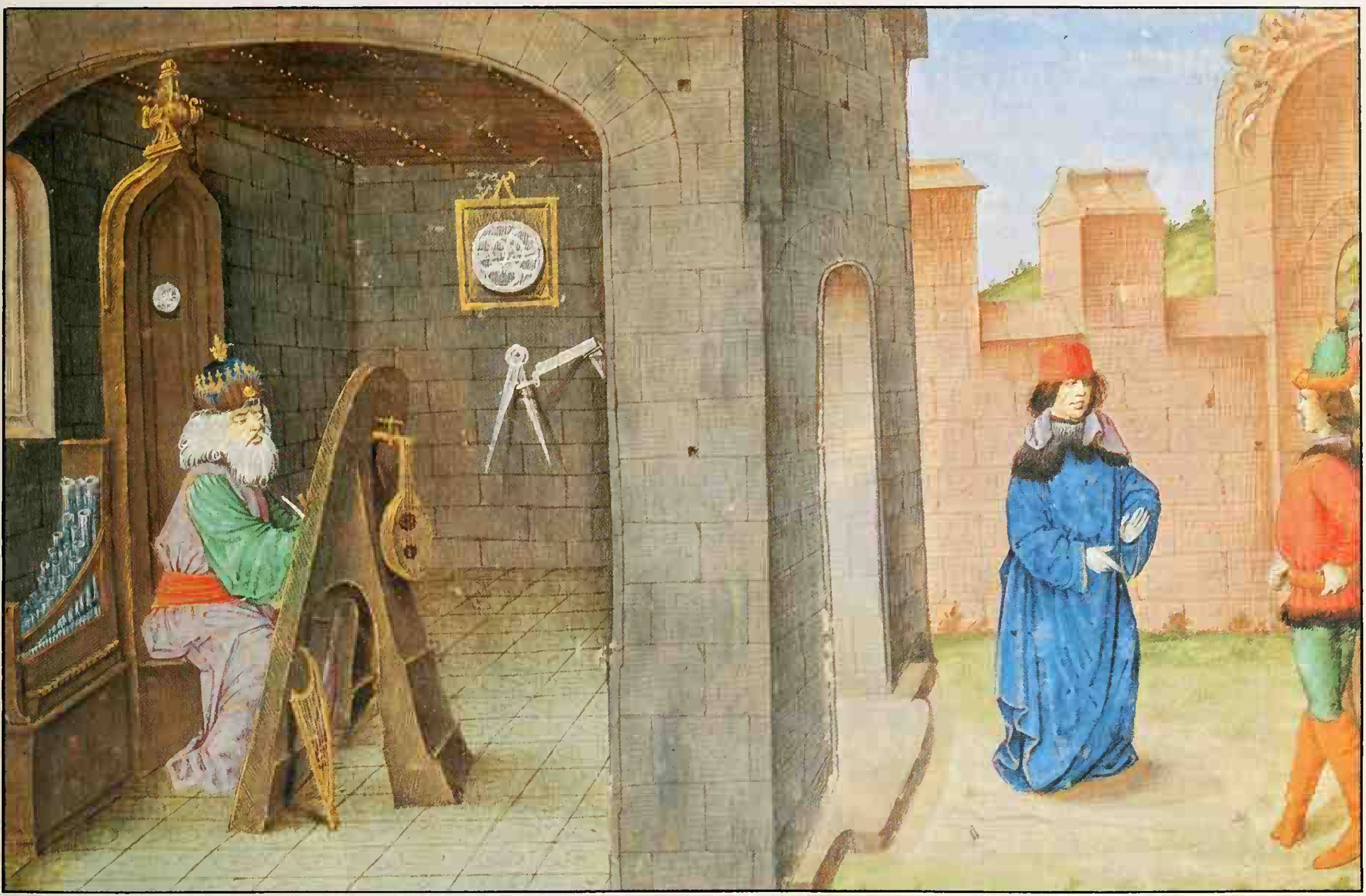
House of the Lie. In the one there is 'ease and benefit', in the other discomfort and torment, 'a long age of darkness, foul food, and cries of woe'.

In addition there is a final reckoning 'at the last turning-point of existence', when there will be a Last Judgement in the form of an ordeal by fire and molten metal which will allot to the righteous and the unrighteous their final destiny of weal or woe. The Last Judgement then, merely confirms the individual judgement at death: salvation and damnation are fixed for all eternity. This 'black and white' doctrine was to enter Judaism and, through Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Zoroastrians, however, were later to modify it themselves, for in the later texts the Last Judgement (which seems unnecessary anyhow) becomes not a judgement at all but a purgation by molten metal in which the wicked are finally purged of their sins and the just suffer nothing since the molten metal has no terrors for them: they experience it as if it were warm milk.

These, then, are the basic doctrines preached by the prophet Zoroaster himself: there is one supreme God, Creator of all things, spiritual and material; aside from him there are two irreconcilable principles – Truth and the Lie, the Holy Spirit and the Destructive Spirit. Alongside these there are 'aspects' of God and also, though less markedly, 'aspects' of the Lie and the Destructive Spirit. Man must choose between the two, and in accordance with his choice he will either be blessed with eternal bliss or chastized with everlasting torment. By 'good' is meant Truth, the proper ordering of things, life, and prosperity: by evil, the Lie, disorder, death, and misery. The dualism is not one of spirit and matter but one of spirit and spirit, matter being in itself good because created by God, though later corrupted by the Devil.

The Later Avesta

Only the *Gathas* purport to be the work of the prophet Zoroaster himself. The rest of the *Avesta* (or rather what survives of it) is later and contains much material that seems to be totally at variance with the prophet's teaching. According to the


British Museum

Zoroaster saw himself as a prophet, the bringer of a new message from the god Ahura Mazdah, the 'Wise Lord': *Zoroaster in his study*, a 15th-century miniature *Facing page* The symbol of Ahura Mazdah

later tradition the 'original' *Avesta* consisted of 21 *Nasks* or 'books', a summary of which survives in the *Denkart*, a work, like all the works written in Pahlavi (Zoroastrian 'middle' Persian), that dates from after the Mohammedan conquest but which draws on much earlier material. Of these 21 Nasks only one remains in its entirety – the *Videvdat* or 'Law against the Demons', a tiresome book largely concerned with the punishments of sins, ritual purification and mythology. Apart from this there is the *Yasna*, the 'sacrifice', or ritual texts accompanying the main Zoroastrian liturgy together with minor liturgical texts, and the *Yashts* or 'hymns of praise' celebrating a whole gamut of pre-Zoroastrian deities which the prophet had certainly ignored and may even have proscribed.

The *Yasna*, or sacrificial liturgy, centres round the immolation of the sacred plant haoma (the Iranian equivalent of the Indian soma), the juice of which is considered to be the elixir of immortality. The *Yasna* is both sacrifice and sacrament: the plant god is slain by being pounded in a mortar and its juice is consumed in order to win eternal life. There seem to be references to this cult in the *Gathas* themselves, and it seems certain from these references that the prophet disapproved of it strongly, at least as practised by the 'worshippers of the daivas'. Be that as it may, the haoma cult appears very soon to have become central to Zoroastrian worship and it has remained so to this day, both among the 10,000 Zoroastrians who still survive in Iran and among the 100,000 Parsees ('Persians'), as the Zoroastrians who emigrated from Iran to India some centuries after the Mohammedan conquest are called (see PARSEES). The haoma sacrifice is the central act of the liturgy, but from beginning to end the material object around which the rite is celebrated is the sacred fire which, like haoma itself, is called the 'son' of Ahura Mazdah.

The Sacrificial Haoma

The sacrifice opens with a confession of faith in the following terms: 'I confess myself a worshipper of Mazdah, a Zoroastrian, a renouncer of the daivas, an upholder of the ahuras.' The formula helps us to see how the Zoroastrians of a later date regarded their religion. They are worshippers of (Ahūra) Mazdah, the only God, proclaimed by Zoroaster as supreme Creator and Lord: hence they are 'Zoroastrians'. But when they add that they are 'renouncers of the daivas' and 'upholders of the ahuras', they seem to be upholding a religion that probably preceded the coming of the prophet and in which there were many ahuras or gods just as there were many daivas or demons who, like Satan and his angels in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, had once themselves been gods. In any case the ahuras, now called *yazatas* or 'worshipful ones', are constantly invoked throughout the *Yasna*. They may either be material manifestations of divinity, pre-eminently fire and water, but also the winds, mountains, and so on, or they may be spiritual, invisible beings who are in fact the ancient Aryan gods, once common to Iran and India; slightly refurbished, it is true, in that they are subjected to the ultimate authority of Ahura Mazdah, the Wise Lord.

But these divinities though they are constantly invoked throughout the *Yasna*, are not essential to it. The central figure, as we have seen, is the sacrificial haoma, but next to him and the sacred fire is a 'god' who figures quite prominently in the *Gathas*, Sraosha. In the *Gathas* he is, like the Bounteous Immortals, an abstract idea. He is the faculty of 'hearing' God's word and therefore of obeying it. In the *Yasna* he is fully personified and is, in a sense, the mediator between man and God. As the spirit of obedience, he also enforces obedience among men and chastizes the wicked, as he chastizes the demons. His continued importance, his relevance, and his popularity are attested by the fact that he alone among all the Zoroastrian pantheon was later identified with a Mohammedan angel (with the angel Gabriel, so familiar to Christians too).

The second main division of the later *Avesta* is the *Yashts* and it is in some ways remarkable that they have survived;

for they are hymns of praise to deities, some of whom are quite certainly pre-Zoroastrian and others almost certainly so. In the *Yasna* these deities are always clearly subordinate to Ahura Mazdah but this is not always so in the *Yashts*, for in two cases at least Ahura Mazdah himself is represented as doing obeisance to them – to Vayu, the wind god, and to Anahita, the goddess of the waters.

The Faith of the Achaemenids

From the Achaemenian inscriptions, from proper names like Mithradates, from rock reliefs of much later date, and from the extraordinary diffusion of the cult of Mithras (see MITHRAS) throughout the Roman Empire shortly after the rise of Christianity, it is clear that the most important of these ancient deities was Mithra – like Ahura Mazdah himself originally a god of the sky and later identified with the sun.

As with everything connected with Zoroastrianism, there has been furious debate as to whether or not the Achaemenid kings were Zoroastrians. About the religion of the earliest of them, Cyrus and Cambyses, there is no evidence, but about that of Darius the Great (521–485 BC) there is plenty, for there are many inscriptions dictated by him. Ahura Mazdah is the only god the Great King invokes. He is the great god 'who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king.' This is recognizably the same god as that of Zoroaster. Similarly, when speaking of the rebels against his authority, Darius says they 'lied' in that they claimed to be kings, 'lying' thus being equivalent to the disruption of the established order – again a Zoroastrian conception. Thus, in his conception of the nature and supremacy of Ahura Mazdah and in his identification of evil with the 'Lie', Darius is at one with Zoroaster. Though it can be argued that he was not formally a 'Zoroastrian', he was certainly a 'worshipper of Mazdah'.

The case of Darius's successor Xerxes (485–466) is even clearer, for he claims to have suppressed the cult of the daivas and to have established some sort of 'Mazdean' orthodoxy: 'Where the daivas had previously been worshipped, there did I worship Ahura Mazdah in accordance with Truth and using the proper rite.' Further he refers to an afterlife in which the good will be 'blessed': 'The man who has respect for the law which Ahura Mazdah has established and who worships Ahura Mazdah in accordance with Truth and using the proper rite, may he be both happy when alive and blessed when dead.' Xerxes, then, was both a 'worshipper of Mazdah' and a 'renouncer of the daivas', and since he refers to 'the law which Ahura Mazdah established', presumably through his prophet Zoroaster, he was almost certainly a 'Zoroastrian'.

During the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–425) the Zoroastrian calendar was introduced, but in this calendar the days and months are named not only after Ahura Mazdah and the Bounteous Immortals but also after the ancient gods who now appear beside them. The Zoroastrianism of the later Achaemenian kings was that of the *Yasna* rather than that of the *Gathas*. And so we find in the rare inscriptions of Artaxerxes II and III the god Mithra and the goddess Anahita invoked together with the supreme god, Ahura Mazdah.

The Last Contest

With the collapse of the Achaemenian Empire, Zoroastrianism disappears as an organized religion until it becomes once more the state religion of the Second (Sassanian) Empire from 226 to 651 AD. To judge from rock reliefs during this period, it would appear that Mithra and Anahita still enjoyed considerable favour both with the royal house and among the people. It was, however, the policy of the new dynasty to seek to establish religious conformity throughout the empire. Now for the first time one can speak of religious orthodoxy; and this, to judge from the Pahlavi books which draw their material from this period, was a rigid dualism in which the Bounteous Immortals and the ancient gods resuscitated in the late Achaemenian period were reduced to the status of angels. The scene was now dominated by two eternal principles, Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazdah) and Ahriman, Ohrmazd being identified with all goodness and light and dwelling in the Endless Light above, Ahriman being equated with all evil and darkness and dwelling in the Endless Darkness below. The two kingdoms are totally separate and independent, but the time comes when Ahriman becomes conscious of the light of Ohrmazd, envies it, attacks it, and invades the material world which Ohrmazd had created as a bulwark against him. For 3000 years the issue of the battle is in doubt, but in the last 3000 years of the existence of this world the power of evil is slowly but relentlessly ground down until the Saviour, the Saoshyans, appears to make all things new. The souls of men, whether they be in heaven or in hell, are reunited with their bodies and are purged in a sea of molten metal. When this is done, Ahriman is expelled back into his native darkness and rendered unconscious for ever. Then the whole creation enjoys eternal bliss in the presence of Ohrmazd, the Lord.

This dualist orthodoxy, however, was questioned by a theological deviation called 'Zurvanism' which subordinated both Ohrmazd and Ahriman to a higher principle, Infinite Time or Zurvan. However, no matter what the main theological trend may have been at the time, Sassanian Zoroastrianism was so wedded to the Sassanian state that, when the latter was overthrown by the forces of the new religion, Islam, which had arisen in the Arabian desert in the 7th century AD, the Zoroastrian Church, no longer being the 'established' Church, rapidly and irreversibly declined. Iran, once the centre of two great empires of which Zoroastrianism had been the official religion, now became a Moslem country; and the Zoroastrian community, having steadily lost ground throughout the centuries, has now been reduced to a mere 10,000 souls living mainly in Yazd and Kerman in the south-east, while another 100,000 or so, descendants of refugees from persecution, survive as the rich and enlightened community of the Parsees in Bombay and other Indian cities. Such has been the fate of a religion that once ruled proudly throughout the Iranian lands.

R. C. ZAEHNER

FURTHER READING: tr. by M. Henning, *The Hymns of Zarathustra* (Hyperion, 1980); M. Boyce ed., *Zoroastrianism* (Barnes & Noble Imports, 1984); R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, (Putnam, 1961), *The teachings of the Magi* (Oxford University Press, 1976).

Men become sorcerers by their own choice, but women become witches because they are inherently evil; yet it is the female whom the ancestor spirits possess, who has the power to heal and make the crops grow. Deep-seated conflicts of this sort are reflected in Zulu social customs

ZULU

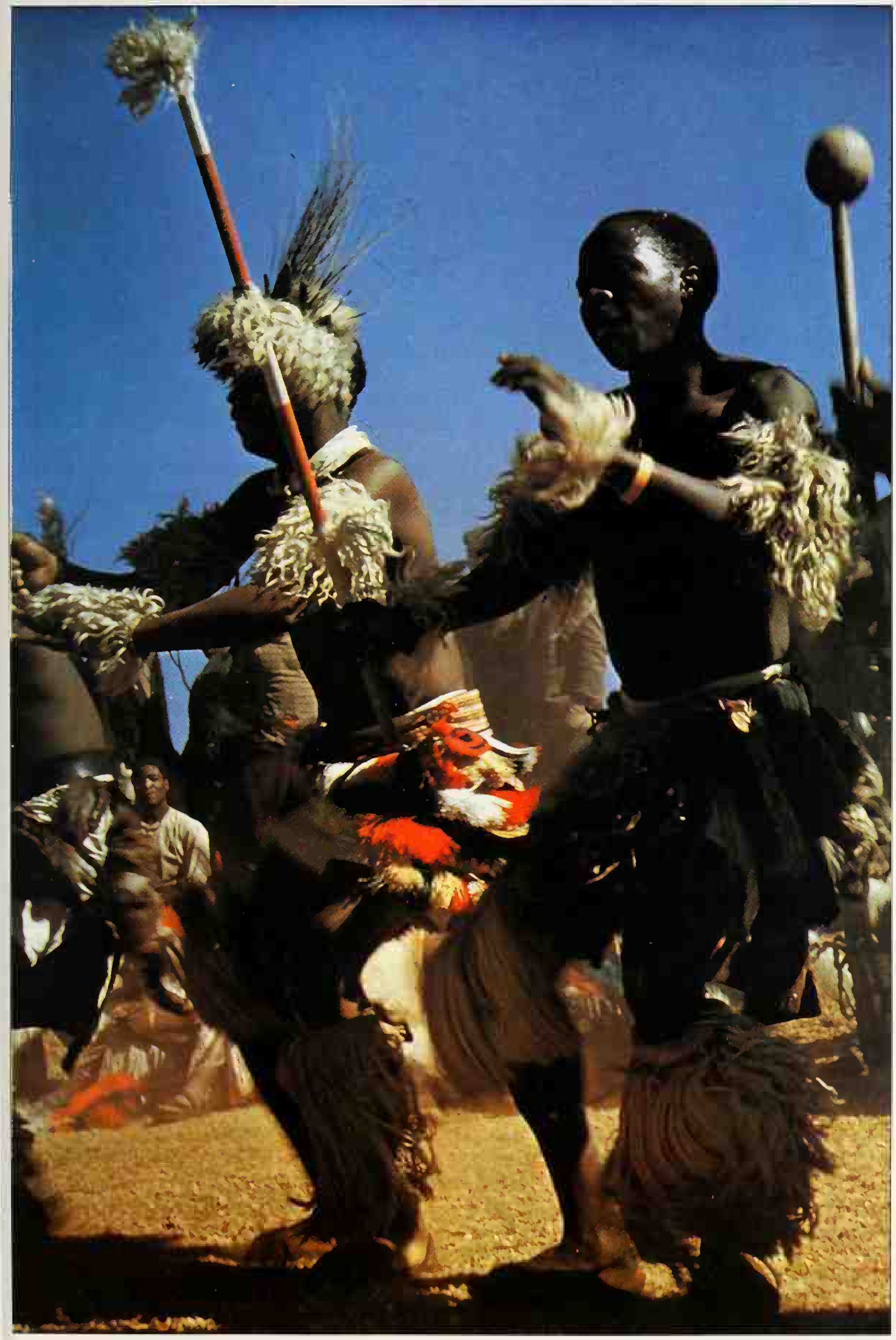
TO UNDERSTAND the religion and the magic of the Zulu, it is necessary to know something of their historical background. The Zulu kingdom existed as an independent unit in south-eastern Africa (the present province of Natal in the Republic of South Africa) in the 19th century. It was established when Shaka (or Chaka), the chief of a small tribe, conquered many of the tribes of the region between 1818 and 1824, while others either fled from him or fled under attacks from tribes driven away by his onslaught. The repercussions of these events were far-reaching, and various nations were created as a direct or indirect result of Shaka's wars.

The Boers inflicted a first major defeat on the Zulu, then under one of Shaka's brothers, in 1838, and took over part of the Zulu territory. The Zulu were finally beaten as a major military power in the region by the British in 1880: they were then ruled by Cetshwayo (or Cetewayo), son of another of Shaka's brothers. Part of the kingdom was ruled by the British, who by then had taken over Natal from the Boers, and the remainder was divided under independent chiefs, including Cetshwayo, who was left with a remnant of his kingdom. Internecine war between these chiefs led to the British establishing rule over the remainder of the kingdom. The former united nation was now organized within British (and from 1910, South African) administration; but in the 1930s there was a revival of Zulu nationalism in adherence to the head of the Royal House, then established as chief of one of the many small chiefdoms into which

Zululand was divided. In the 1960s, the Zulu homeland was established as one of the Bantustans under the then-repressive South African apartheid policy, and subsequently Zulus established an active political presence during the period that preceded the advent of universal suffrage in the 1990s.

Early Zulu history has been worked out from tribal traditions, from the records of shipwrecked mariners, and from the records of white travellers, traders, missionaries and administrators, of whom some English settled among the Zulu in 1825.

Zulu homeland is one of the pleasantest regions of Africa, the main part consisting of rolling, well-pastured hills, lying between the Indian Ocean and the Drakensberg Mountains. The soils were fertile, but are now much eroded. It has a monsoon climate, and records show that, on average, there are bad droughts only once in five years. Rain often comes in severe thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, of which the forked form is most destructive. Then the rivers come down from the hills in walls of flood. Cattle thrived, though since the early 1900s they have been plagued by various diseases. The main crops of the Zulu were sorghum and millet, and in later years maize, with gourds, pulses and pumpkins. Their houses were originally made of grass on a framework of branches, beehive-shaped, but later these were replaced by mudded cylinders with a thatched conical roof. The houses were spread in small clusters over the hillsides, each inhabited by an extended family, the core of which was an agnatic lineage, men related to one another by descent through males. The capitals of the kings, and the military barracks in which they housed their warriors and their royal women, were once inhabited by thousands, and were three to four miles in circumference. They were destroyed after the Anglo-Zulu War.



Camera Press London

A proud and warlike people, the Zulu were welded into a formidable fighting force by Shaka, the warrior chief, who organized all men within a certain age group into regiments, and housed them in royal barracks: this martial history is reflected in the ritual dances still performed by Zulus on ceremonial occasions

Regicide and Civil War

Records show that until late in the 18th century the region was inhabited by many small tribes, ranging in total population from 500 to perhaps 5000. The relationships between the tribes oscillated between friendly peaceable intermarriage and short sharp skirmishes. The tribes were also split up periodically by civil wars, or sections of a tribe would move off amicably to newfound independence.

This system came to an end about the end of the 18th century, when a number of stronger tribes began to extend their sway over their neighbours. The most plausible explanation for this change is that the population of both human beings and cattle (which bred quickly) had increased in the well-favoured region until it exceeded the carrying capacity of the land under the prevailing methods of husbandry.

A series of battles between dominant tribes ensued: Shaka, head of a very small tribe, took over the disintegrating kingdom of his overlord when the latter was killed, and in a few years built a great nation of 250,000 people. His wars solved the crisis of population; he was successful because he invented more lethal weapons and methods of fighting, as well as new tactics for battle.

Shaka administered his nation in a system almost, but not absolutely, dictated by the system of husbandry, which entailed a widespread dispersal of population. The land was divided into counties ruled by chiefs. Some of the counties comprised defeated tribes: they were ruled sometimes by their legitimate chiefs or their heirs, sometimes by a scion of the chiefly family who was favoured by Shaka, while occasionally he placed favoured 'strangers' over them. Other counties he constituted out of broken tribes, or by settling people in areas whose inhabitants had been killed or had fled; the chiefs appointed there were those who had helped him in his struggles.

Shaka himself had experienced an unhappy childhood, for his mother and he had both been driven from their home: he therefore killed all his paternal half-brothers (the Zulu were polygamous), except for three. He did not give these surviving halfbrothers counties to rule; however, he gave a distant cadet of the Zulu royal family such a county. Shaka's major innovation was to organize the men of his kingdom into regiments, consisting of all the men of a narrow age range, housing them for most of the year in royal barracks. The men were forbidden to marry until they were in their mid-30s, when they were allowed to marry a much younger regiment of women (similarly organized), who at that point would be around 23 years old.

Shaka ruled tyrannously, and 12 years after he acceded to the Zulu chieftainship, he was killed by two of his brothers, one of whom succeeded him. The successor was also a tyrant, and 12 years later another brother fled with 17,000 people to the Boers, and with their help defeated and drove out the king. The new king was the last of that generation: he was also the first Zulu king to marry, and he had many wives and sons. Seventeen years later the sons of two of the queens fought over the succession to the throne, and Cetshwayo was successful. He ruled till his defeat by the British 23 years later. Thus assassination of kings and civil war were endemic in the Zulu nation, as they had been in the earlier polity of small tribes: and this fact was reflected in certain ceremonies.

Keystone

The Maiden Goddess

The Zulu have a conception of a High God, who broke off the nations from a reed-bed, but he plays little part in their daily life and is not worshipped. Distinct from him is Heaven, a concept of a great power in the sky, barely anthropomorphized, present in storms and particularly in lightning, and manifested in the thunderbolts which are numerous because of the violence of the storms. These thunderbolts are thought to be the excreta of a thunderbird. Heaven is believed to influence certain persons who begin to get drowsy, become ill, and wander far from the habitations of men. They are then initiated as Heaven doctors, and can plant magical substances around villages to protect them from lightning, while during storms they go out on the hilltops and fight the storms with weapons and magic. Several people are killed each year by lightning, and these magicians are much respected.

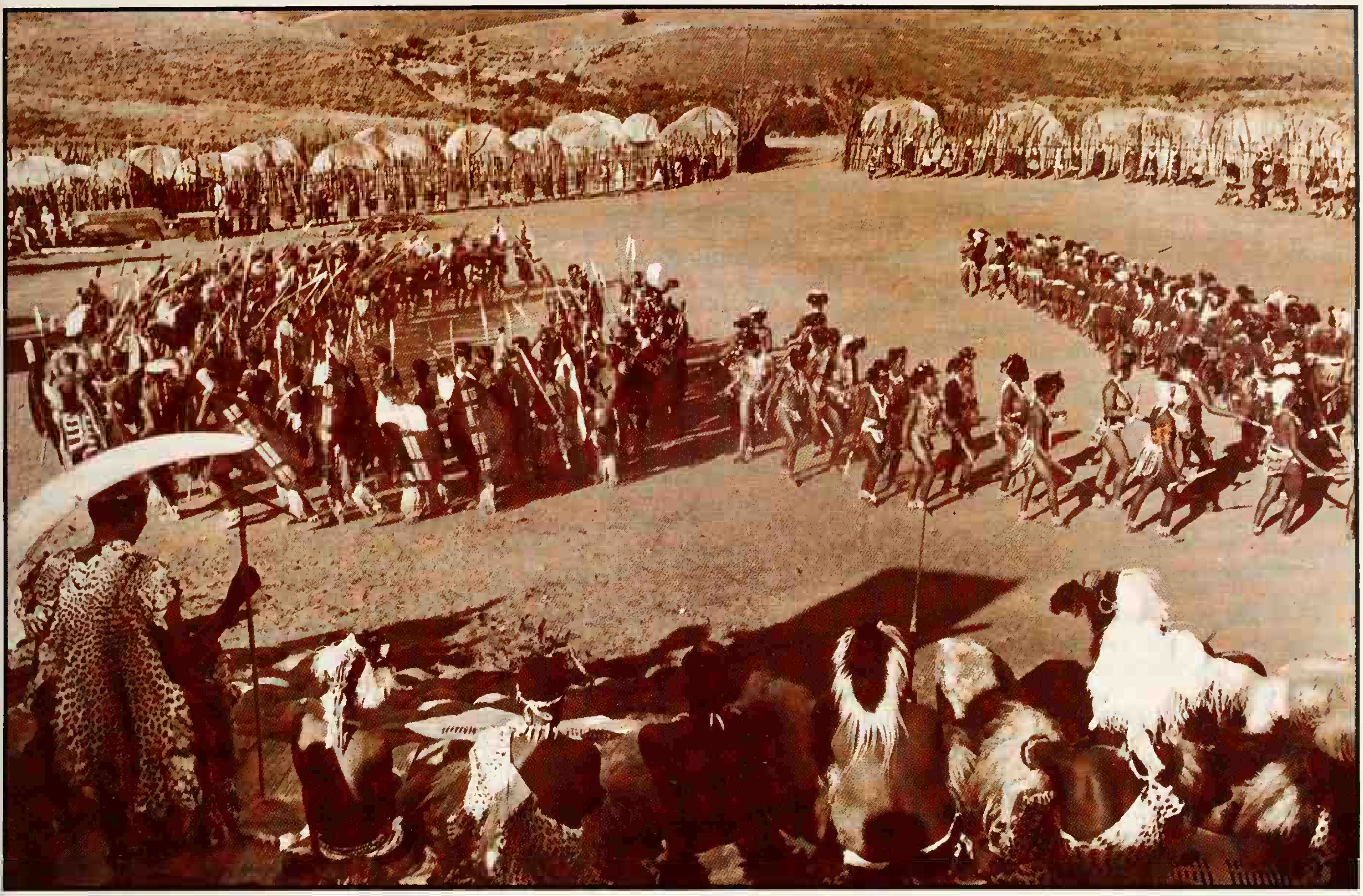
These beliefs about lightning are not reconciled with the idea that dangerous forked lightning is female, while harmless sheet lightning is male, or with a belief in a goddess who is supposed to make the rain and who is associated with the rainbow, which is believed to be the rafter of her hut in the sky. This goddess is graphically described: '. . . presenting the appearance of a beautiful landscape with verdant forests on some parts of her body, grass-covered slopes on others, and cultivated slopes on others . . . robed with light as a garment . . .' The Zulu had few myths of origin or of creation, but they speak of the goddess, who is a maiden, as having come from heaven to teach people to make beer, to plant, to harvest, and all the useful arts.

The most important spiritual beings in Zulu belief are the spirits of their ancestors. These are believed to live below the earth or in the sky, or to appear in the villages in the form of particular kinds of snakes, sometimes dangerous species, but believed to behave peaceably and to be recognizable as their deceased 'inhabitants' by marks on the body. The ancestors are one of the two principal agencies in Zulu belief influencing good and ill fortune: they expect their descendants, those related to them by descent through males, to place all milk and beer in the 'great hut' of the village for them to taste and to pour it into the ground of the cattle corral round which houses are built, in periodic offerings. They also require that sacrifices of cattle be offered to them. Should their descendants neglect to make these offerings, the ancestors will send disease; and they will also do so if their descendants default in their obligations to other kinsmen. They are prayed to at ceremonies for birth, initiation and marriage, and at funerals, and also at sowing first fruits, and harvest, as well as on other occasions. The ancestors of kings and chiefs look after their political dependents.

During illness, diviners of various kinds are consulted to find which ancestor is sending the misfortune so that it can be besought to remove the disease. It is believed that male ancestors are reasonable and will remove the misfortune if it has been sent for neglect of offerings, or when the breach of obligation which provoked the affliction has been redressed. On the other hand, female ancestral spirits are capricious, and may allow the misfortune to continue even after amends have been made.

Inherently Evil Female

This belief, like the belief in the femaleness of forked lightning, reflects a deep-seated conception in Zulu belief that femininity is inherently full of threatening evil occult power. This fear appears in the many taboos that attach to menstruating women and their effluxes, which threaten all things male and all virile enterprises. The belief is marked in a distinction made between sorcerers and witches who, like the ancestral spirits, are occult agencies of good and evil. The Zulu have a very rich assortment of magical substances to treat disease in humans and livestock (50% of which achieve their intended purposes, according to pharmacological tests), to obtain fertility of women, cattle and crops, to protect themselves against thieves and lightning, to influence those in power, to reintroduce murderers into social life, and so forth. Some of these substances are also believed to be used for sorcery, for making others fall ill or even to kill them. It is believed that men, and not women, make the conscious moral decision to learn these evil arts: men are evil deliberately. But women become witches by an inherent evil in their voracious sexuality, which attracts to them sexual familiars, who then demand the lives of the close kinsmen of the husband, or of his children by his other wives. Again,



Camera Press London

Above and left **Young Zulu warriors and the maidens they were to marry performing a marriage dance in the royal kraal; although women were traditionally regarded as inherently evil, they were required to exercise a power for good in ceremonies to the maiden goddess at seedtime, and to bless the crops**

there is an inherent evil in femininity, since a woman does not deliberately seek a familiar.

On the other hand, women also contain much occult power for good: the great majority of those who become possessed by ancestral spirits, which speak through them and divine the cause of illness and dictate cures, are women. Nevertheless, for a woman to become socially valuable in this way she has to pass through a very painful illness. In addition, women provide rituals of fruitfulness: pregnant women perform rites to bless the crops, and women and girls enact ceremonies to the maiden goddess at seedtime and when blight affects the grain.

Songs of Hate

These ceremonies exhibit the ritualization of social roles and relationships which is characteristic of tribal societies (see RITES OF PASSAGE; RITUAL). In supplicating at seedtime for a good harvest, the young unmarried girls would don men's garments and carry shields and spears. They drove out the cattle (normally taboo to them) to pasture and milked them. Meanwhile their mothers planted a garden far out in the veld, and poured a libation of beer to the goddess. Thereafter this garden was neglected. At various stages of the ceremonies women and girls went naked, and sang lewd songs. Men and boys hid inside their huts, and might not go near the females; if they did, they were attacked by the women.

In order to understand how this ceremony, so expressive of conflict in society, operated, it is necessary to probe deeply into the position of women. The present writer has maintained that women's position in Zulu society was highly ambivalent. A woman was expected to bear many sons to strengthen the agnatic lineage of her husband, and it was feared that if she was barren she might turn to witchcraft, and she was generally treated very harshly by others.

On the other hand, when a woman produced sons she in fact produced competitors for the limited property and social positions in the lineage, thus introducing strife into the lineage that was supposed to be strengthened. It is arguable that the occult beliefs about women concealed this deep contradiction in their social position and that in the rites previously mentioned the ambivalent emotions generated were transposed to social ends.

Similar analysis can be applied to the national ceremonies performed at festivals of the first fruits. During these ceremonies, warriors sang songs of hate and hurled insults against the king, in order to strengthen the nation through the king. Comparative research shows that such ceremonies occur where civil war and royal assassination are endemic, but where king and subjects are not cut off from one another by class barriers. The symbolic representation of deep existing conflicts seems to release emotions which become fixed positively on socially approved groups and values.

Of the many Zulu who have been converted to Christianity since 1880, the majority are women. As in European Christianity, many sects have developed and, as throughout South Africa, they are markedly influenced by the colour bar under apartheid. Some Zulu independent sects are organized as are mission churches; others are syncretistic of Zulu and Christian belief, and combine possession by the Holy Spirit, speaking with tongues, laying on of hands for healing, cults against witchcraft and sorcery (demons), with sometimes the ancestral spirits reappearing as angels.

MAX GLUCKMAN

FURTHER READING: M. Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Barnes and Noble, 1969); *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand* (Manchester Univ. Press, Manchester, 1958), *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (Free Press, 1963), *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* (Biblio Dist., 1977); E. J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus* (Tri-Ocean); D. Burness, *Shaka, King of the Zulus* (Three Continents, 1976).

ZURVAN

ZOROASTRIANISM and Manicheanism are commonly regarded as being the two classical dualist religions: and this is true. But there is all the difference in the world between them, for Manicheanism is a dualism of spirit and matter, spirit being identified with good, matter with evil. Zoroastrianism, on the other hand, is a spiritual dualism of two spirits, the one good and the other evil, and they are irreconcilably opposed. Matter, however, is created by Ohrmazd, the good God, though it comes to be corrupted by Ahriman, the 'pure' spirit of evil (see AHRIMAN; DUALISM; MANICHEANS; OHRMAZD; ZOROASTRIANISM). The basic text for this dualism is to be found in the *Gathas* or 'Songs' of Zoroaster himself where the prophet is represented as saying: 'I will speak out concerning the two Spirits of whom, at the beginning of existence, the Holier thus spoke to him who is Evil: "Neither our thoughts, nor our teachings, nor our wills, nor our choices, nor our words, nor our deeds, nor our consciences, nor yet our souls agree." '

The irreducible antagonism between the two Spirits seems clear enough here. But there is another text (quoted in the article on Zoroastrianism) in which it is unambiguously stated that the two Spirits were twins; and that would imply that they had a common father.

God of Infinite Time

Now in the later *Avesta*, as the sacred book of the Zoroastrians is called, an entity with the name of *Zrvan akarena* ('Infinite Time') is sometimes mentioned. Nothing much is said about him, but at least he is infinite, whereas Ohrmazd and Ahriman, God and the Devil, had by now become independent principles, each limiting the other. A different view is quoted by Eudemus of Rhodes, a pupil of Aristotle, who lived in the 4th century BC. He is reported as having said that 'the Magi and the whole Aryan race call the whole intelligible and unitary universe either Space or Time from which a good god and an evil demon were separated out, or, according to others, light and darkness before these . . . One of these (higher principles) is ruled by Ohrmazd, the other by Ahriman.'

This is the philosophical account of the 'Zurvanite' position. Light and darkness are ruled respectively by Ohrmazd and Ahriman, God and the Devil; but the highest principle is beyond all these, and this principle is Space-Time, Zrvan akarena, who in the later language becomes *Zurvan i akanarak*, 'Infinite Zurvan-Time.'

By the time of the Sassanian Empire (226-651 AD), however, Zurvan had become a proper name and a personal god, the word for 'time' in Persian now being *zaman*, as it is to this day. During the Sassanian period, to judge from the Zoroastrian books which, though actually written as late as the 9th century AD, are generally held to represent the views of Zoroastrian orthodoxy during the last century or so of the Sassanian Empire, one would not realize that the god Zurvan was of any importance at all, let alone that he was regarded by some as being the father of both Ohrmazd and Ahriman. Indeed, in these so-called 'Pahlavi' books, Zoroastrianism (or the 'Good Religion' as the Zoroastrians themselves now called it) was defined as the religion of the two principles as distinct from the monotheism of the Jews and Christians. 'I must have no doubt,' a Zoroastrian catechism reads, 'but that there are two first principles, one the Creator, and the other the Destroyer. The Creator is Ohrmazd who is all goodness and all light; and the Destroyer is the accursed Ahriman who is all wickedness and full of death, a liar and a deceiver.' Nothing could be clearer than that.

There is no question that there is a principle beyond these two. In the whole corpus of the Pahlavi books there is only one mention of the theory (explicitly stated in the *Gathas* though it is) that Ohrmazd and Ahriman are twins, and in this one passage it is denounced as a doctrine thought up by a demon.

The Pahlavi books, as they now stand, reflect a doctrine that was current at the end of the Sassanian period, and we can be fairly certain that this complete dualism was official doctrine then. So too was it after the death of Shapur (Sapor) I in 271 AD as we now know from a long inscription of the high priest of that time, one Kartir. Unfortunately this agreement between the 9th century books and the 3rd century inscription is not conclusive; for if neither had survived and we had to rely exclusively on Christian, Manichean and Moslem sources, we would be inclined to think that Zurvanism was the predominant trend in the Zoroastrianism of the Sassanian period, not the neat dualism of the Pahlavi texts, and this for two principal reasons. First, when the Christians attack Zoroastrianism, they attack not the dualism we know from the Pahlavi books but the theory that Ohrmazd and Ahriman are twins. Secondly, when the Manichees started to translate their own scriptures into Persian they called their own supreme Spirit, the 'Father of Greatness' and king of the kingdom of light – not Ohrmazd but Zurvan. And this is very odd indeed since the Zoroastrian Ohrmazd who is 'all goodness and all light' corresponds as exactly as you could wish to the Manichean 'Father of Greatness'. The Zoroastrian Zurvan, on the other hand, as we know him from the Christian sources, is rather 'the whole intelligible and unitary universe, either Space or Time', of Eudemus, but now transferred onto a purely mythological plane.

The Zurvanite myth is preserved in several sources which substantially agree and must go back to a common original. In this myth (quoted in the article on Ahriman) Zurvan is the father of Ohrmazd and Ahriman.

The message of the myth is clear. In the beginning, all is One in Zurvan who, philosophically, is Time-Space. Basically he is good and light, but there is a fundamental flaw in his nature represented by his 'doubt', and this is materialized in the shape of Ahriman who is 'dark and stinking', 'a liar and a deceiver'. Unless Zurvan is to be false to his vow, he must make Ahriman king of this world for 9000 years, though Ohrmazd may be high priest in heaven above. In any case, Ahriman's power will be broken in the end, and then Ohrmazd will be 'all in all' in 'infinite time' of which Zurvan is the mythological representation.

Form of Fire

In the *Selections of Zadspram*, the only one of the Pahlavi books where Zurvan plays a prominent part, we learn a little more about his 'testament' to Ohrmazd and Ahriman and about Ahriman's 9000-year rule:

> When first creation began to move and Zurvan, for the sake of movement, brought that form, the black and ashen garment to Ahriman, he made a treaty in this wise: 'This is that implement like unto fire, blazing, harassing all creatures, that hath the very substance of Az (Greed, Lust, Concupiscence). When the period of nine thousand years comes to an end, if thou hast not perfectly fulfilled that which thou didst threaten at the beginning, that thou wouldst bring all material existence to hate Ohrmazd and to love thee, . . . then, by means of this weapon, Az will devour . . . thy creation; and she herself will starve.'

From other texts we can deduce that Zurvan gave a corresponding 'implement' or 'form' to Ohrmazd – 'a form of fire – bright, white, round, and manifest afar', which is associated with priesthood and wisdom as it is in the 'classic' Zurvanite myth.

How are we to interpret all this? The birth of Ahriman from Zurvan's doubt is a 'Fall' in the divine nature itself, the manifestation of an essential imperfection in the godhead. To compensate for this Fall Zurvan endows Ohrmazd with wisdom, the priestly virtue par excellence, but to Ahriman he gives Az who is Greed, Lust, Concupiscence, Acquisitiveness, and who is insatiable. Ultimately, then, Az is self-destructive and so in the end Ahriman's kingdom is destroyed by the very 'implement' he had accepted from Zurvan and made into his own 'selfhood'. Having supplied Ohrmazd and Ahriman with the 'implements' appropriate to each, Zurvan plays no further part in the cosmic struggle. Only at the very end does he appear to help Ohrmazd administer the *coup de grâce* to Ahriman, Az, and their evil creation. Even so, Zurvan must be seen as a God that failed.

(See also TIME.)

R. C. ZAEHNER

FURTHER READING: R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (Putnam, 1961); *Zurvan, a Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Biblo and Tanner, 1973).